ARRAIGNMENT

by

CLARENCE DARROW

FARMINGTON

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A NOTE

FOR THE SECOND EDITION OF "FARMINGTON"

SOME few copies of this little book have reached my old-time home and the companions of my early years. Still other volumes have been read by the acquaintances and friends of my later life. From both the old neighbors and the new have come the query as to whether I am not John Smith.

If these companions do not know, how is it possible for me to tell? I am not sure that I really know John Smith any better than the other mortals who have met and passed him here and there in his journey through the world. Certain, indeed, I am that all of these have not seen the same John Smith, and that their conception of the boy and man has come largely from their own characters and experiences in life.

Even had I sought to tell my story as it is, how could I or any of the rest be sure whether I had told the truth or not? With all of us there are at least two John Smiths — the outward man, moved by all sorts of feelings, emotions, and desires, hampered and fettered by conditions that seem impossible to

overcome, wandering in a zigzag way along the short uncertain path of life, and the other " the inner self," who dreams and hopes and tries and really lives and moves in a land his outer being cannot reach.

No doubt the man who tells his story thinks the real life is the inner self, while his neighbors see only the material one. Perhaps both are right and both are wrong.

Still, whatever the plan or scheme, no one can sincerely write of any but himself, or feel any emotions but his own. And more than this, however diverse the paths of men may seem to be, still the hand of nature and of life is strong upon us all, and our real true selves are wonderfully alike. And so it seems to me that if any part of this book shall appeal to the reader as being true to life,— a portion of himself,— then he may be sure that it is in fact and truth my story too.

I cannot withhold an expression of my satisfaction for the kind reception of this little book, and still now and then critics have found traces of a cynicism and pessimism that I did not know were there. With many people, no doubt, these words are often used to characterize a strain of sadness or a sombre tint. But these are everywhere present in human life, and make up a large part of the experiences of the child and man. Yet I am very sure that with me, as with most others who have lived to middle life, childhood must always seem an enchanted land;

and the memories of those hallowed years must always make the fabric of the sweetest dreams that fill the maturer mind with pleasures and regrets.

CLARENCE DARROW.

Chicago, December 1, 1904.

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FARMINGTON

CHAPTER I

ABOUT MY STORY

I BEGIN this story with the personal pronoun. To begin it in any other way would be only a commonplace assumption of a modesty that I do not really have. It is most natural that the personal pronoun should stand as the first word of this tale, for I cannot remember a time when my chief thoughts and emotions did not concern myself, or were not in some way related to myself. I look back through the years that have passed, and find that the first consciousness of my being and the hazy indistinct memories of my childhood are all about myself, — what the world, and its men and its women, and its beasts and its plants, meant to me. This feeling is all there is of the past and all there is of the present; and as I look forward on my fast shortening path, I am sure that my last emotions, like my first, will come from the impressions that the world is yet able to make upon the failing senses that shall still connect me with mortal life.

So why should I not begin this tale with the per-

sonal pronoun? And why should I not use it over and over again, with no effort to disguise the fact that whatever the world may be to you, still to me it is nothing except as it influences and affects my life and me?

I have been told that I was born a long time ago, back in the State of Pennsylvania, on the outskirts of a little struggling town that slept by night and by day along a winding stream, and between two ranges of high hills that stood sentinel on either side. The valley was very narrow, and so too were all the people who lived in the little town. These built their small white frame houses and barns close to the river-side, for it was only near its winding banks that the soil would raise corn, potatoes, and hay,— potatoes for the people, and hay and corn for the other inhabitants, who were almost as important to the landscape and almost as close to my early life as the men and women who gathered each Sunday in the large white church, and who had no doubt that they were different from the horses and cattle, and would live in some future world that these other animals could never reach. Even then I felt that perhaps, if this was true, the horses and cattle had the best of the scheme of the universe, for the men and women never seemed to enjoy life very much, excepting here and there some solitary person who was pointed out as a terrible example, who would surely suffer in the next world during the eternity which my long-faced sober neighbors would spend in enjoying the pleas-

ures they had so righteously denied themselves while here on earth.

Of course no one will expect me to tell all my life. In fact, much of the most interesting part must be left out entirely, as is the case with all lives that are really worth the writing; and unless mine is one of these, why bother with the story? Polite society, that buys books and reads them,— at least reads them,— would not tolerate the whole; so this is an expurgated life, or, rather, an expurgated story of a life. Thank God, the life was not expurgated any more than absolutely necessary, sometimes not even so much as that. But so far as I can really tell my story, I shall make a brave endeavor to tell it truthfully, at least as near as the truth can be told by one who does not tell the whole truth,— which, after all, is not so very near.

Lest anyone who might borrow this book and read it should think that I am not so very good, and am putting my best foot foremost, let me hasten to say that if I told the whole truth it would be much more favorable to me than this poor expurgated version will make it seem. I have done many very good things which I shall not dare to set down in these pages, for if I should record them some envious and unkind readers might say that I did these things in order to write them in a book and get fame and credit for their doing, and so after all they were not really good. But even the bad things that I leave out were not so very bad,— indeed, they were not

bad at all, if one has my point of view of life and knows all the facts. The trouble is, there are so few who have my point of view, and most of those are bound to pretend that they have not. Then, too, no one could possibly tell all the facts, for one can write only with pen and ink, and long after everything is past and gone, while one lives with flesh and blood, and sometimes tingling blood at that, and only a single moment at a time. So it may be that no one could write a really truthful story if he would, and perhaps the old fogies are right in fixing the line as to what may be set down and what must be left out. At least, I promise that the reader who proclaims his propriety the loudest, and from the highest house-top, need not have the slightest fear — or hope — about this book, for I shall watch every word with the strictest care, and the moment I find myself wandering from the beaten path I shall fetch myself up with the roundest and the quickest turn. And so, having made myself thus clear as to the plans and purposes of my story, there is no occasion to tarry longer at its threshold.

I have always had the highest regard for integrity, and have ever by precept urged it upon other people; therefore in these pages I shall try, as I have said, to tell the truth; still I am afraid that I shall not succeed, for, after all, I can tell about things only as they seem to me,— and I am not in the least sure that my childhood home, and the boys and girls with whom I played, were really like what they seem to

have been, when I rub my eyes and awaken in the fairy-land that I left so long ago. So, to be perfectly honest with the reader,— which I am bound to be as long as I can and as far as I can,— I will say that this story is only a story of impressions after all. But this is doubtless the right point of view, for life consists only of impressions, and when the impressions are done the life is done.

I really do not know just why I am telling this story, for it is only fair to let the reader know at the beginning, so that he need not waste his time, that nothing ever happened to me,— that is, nothing has happened yet, and all my life I have been trying hard to keep things from happening. But as nothing ever happened, how can there be any story for me to write? I am unable to weave any plot, because there never were any plots in my life, excepting a few that never came to anything, and so were really no part of my life. What happened to me is nothing more than what happens to everyone; so why should I expect people to bother to read my story? Why should they pay money to buy my book, which is not a story after all?

I hardly think I am writing this for fame. If that were the case, I should tell the things that I leave out, for I know that they would be more talked about than the commonplace things that I set down. But I have always wanted to write a book. I remember when I was very small, and used to climb on a chair and look at the rows of books on my

father's shelves, I thought it must be a wonderful being who could write all the pages of a big book, and I would have given all the playthings that I ever hoped to have for the assurance that some day I might possibly write down so many words and have them printed and bound into a book. But my father always told me I could never write a book unless I studied hard,— Latin, Greek, geometry, history, and a lot of things that I knew nothing about then and not much more now. As I grew older, I was too poor and too lazy to learn all the things that my good father said I must know if I should ever write a book, but I never gave up the longing, even when I felt how impossible it would be to realize my dream.

I never studied geometry, or history, or Greek, and I studied scarcely any Latin, and not much arithmetic; and I never did anything with grammar, except to study it,— in fact, I always thought that this was the only purpose for which grammar was invented. But in spite of all this, I wanted to write a book, and resolved that I would write a book. Of course, as I am not a scholar, and have never learned anything out of books to tell about in other books, there was nothing for me to do but tell of the things that had happened to me. So I tell this story because it is the only story I know,— and even this one I do not know so very well. Sometimes I think I am one kind of person, and then sometimes I think I am another kind; and I am never quite sure why I do

any particular thing, or why I do not do it, excepting the things I am afraid to do. But there is no reason now why I should not write this book, for I have money enough to get it printed and bound, and even if no one ever buys a copy still I can say that I have written a book. I understand that a great many books are published in this way, and I must have read a number that never would have been printed if the author had not been able to pay for them himself.

But I have put off writing this story for many, many years, until at last I am beginning to think of getting old; and if I linger much longer over unimportant excuses and explanations, I fear that I shall die, and future generations will never know that I have lived. For I am quite certain that no one else will ever write my story, and unless I really get to work, even my name will be forgotten excepting by the few who go back to my old-time home, and open the wire gate of the little graveyard, and go down the winding path between the white gravestones until they reach my mound. I know that they will find it there, for I have already made my will and provided that I shall be carried back to the little Pennsylvania town beside the winding stream where I used to stone the frogs; and I have written down the exact words that shall be carved upon my marble headstone,— that is, all the words except those that are to tell of the last event, and these we are all of us very willing to leave to someone else.

But this story is about life and action, and boys and girls, and men and women; and I really did not intend to take the reader to my grave in the very first chapter of the book.

CHAPTER II

OF MY CHILDHOOD

I FORGOT to mention that my name is John Smith. Of course this is a very plebeian name, but I am in no way responsible for it. As long as I can remember, I answered to the call of "John" or "Johnny" many a time in my childhood, and even later, when I would much have preferred not to hear the call. My father's name was John Smith, too. No doubt he, and his father before him, could see no way to avoid the Smith, and thought it could not make much difference to add the John. The chief trouble that I have experienced from the name has come from getting my letters mixed up with other people's,— mainly my father's, — which often caused me embarrassment in my younger days.

I have tried very hard to remember when I first knew my name was John. Indeed, I have often wondered when it was that I first knew that I was I, and how that fact dawned upon my mind. Over and over again I have tried to remember my first thoughts and experiences of life, but have always failed in the attempt. If I could only tell of my first sensations, as I looked at the blue sky, and felt the warm sun, and heard the singing birds in my

infancy, I am sure they would interest the reader. But I can give no testimony upon these important points. I have no doubt, however, that when I looked upon the heavens and the earth for the first time I must have felt the same ignorance and awe and wonder that possess my mind to-day when I try to understand the same unexplainable mysteries that have always filled me with queries, doubts, and fears.

Neither can I tell just what I first came to remember; and when I look back to that little home beside the creek I am not quite sure whether the feelings that I have are of things that I actually saw and felt and lived, or whether some imaginings of my young brain have taken the form and semblance of real life.

I was only one of a large family, mostly older than myself; but while I was only one, I was the chief one, and the rest were important only as they affected me. It must have been the rule of our family that each of the children should have the right to give orders to those younger than himself; at any rate, all the older ones told me what to do, and I in turn claimed the same privilege with those younger than myself.

My early remembrances have little sequence or logical connection. I am quite unable to tell which events came first of those that must have happened when I was very young.

Among my earliest impressions is one of a hill in

our back yard, and of our going down it to bring water from the well. I am sure that the hill is not a dream, for I have been back since and found it there, although not near as long and steep as it seemed in those far-off years. I remember that we children used to slide down this hill and then walk up again. Even then I was willing to do a great deal of work for a very small amount of fun. Somehow, in looking back, it seems as if I were always sliding downhill and tugging my sled back to the top in the dusk of the evening. I cannot quite understand how it is that I remember the evening best, but there it is as I unroll the scroll,— there are the dents in my memory, and there is the little boy pulling his sled uphill and looking in at the lighted kitchen window at the top. There, too, are the older and wiser members of the family,— those who have learned that the short sensation of sliding down the hill is not worth the long tug up; a lesson which, although I am growing old and gray, I never have been wise enough to learn. There are the older ones gathered around the table with their books, or busy with their household work,— the old family circle that I see so plainly now in the lamplight through the window, perhaps more plainly for the years that lie between. This magic circle was long since broken and scattered, and lives only in the memory of the man-child who knew so little then of what life really meant, and who knows so little now.

It is strange, but somehow I have no such distinct

recollection of our home as I have of the other objects that were familiar to my childish mind. I can see the little muddy brook that ran just back of the garden fence. Down the hill on the edge of the stream stood a log cheese-house,— at least, it seems so now,— and back of this cheese-house beside the brook must have been a favorite spot for me to wade and fish, although I have no remembrance that I ever caught anything, which fact I am happy to record. Beyond the stream was an orchard. I am uncertain whether or not it belonged to my father, although I rather think it must have been owned by somebody else, the apples always looked so tempting and so red,— which reminds me that all through life it has seemed to me that no fruit was quite so sweet as that which was just beyond my reach. Anyhow, this orchard stands out very plainly in my mind. It was a large orchard,— in fact, a great forest of trees; and I remember that I always stole over the fence intending to get the apples on the nearest tree, but they did not taste so sweet nor look so red as some others farther on, which in turn were passed by for others yet a little farther off, until I had gone quite through the orchard in my endeavor to get the very best. Although I have been grown up for many a year, somehow this habit of seeing something better farther on has clung to me through life. So tenacious is this habit, that I fancy I have missed much that is valuable and good in my eager haste to get something better still. I am not quite

certain about the orchard,— perhaps it was not so very large after all; at least, when I went back a few years ago there was no cheese-house, and no orchard, and even the brook was grown up to grass and weeds. I know that in my childhood my parents moved from the old house to another slightly better, and nearer town; but though I can clearly remember certain incidents of both, still I have no recollection of our moving, and it is utterly impossible to keep the impressions of each separate and distinct.

My first memory of a schoolhouse seems quite clear. It may be that the things I remember never really happened, although the impression of them is strong upon my mind. I must have been very young, hardly more than three or four years old, and was doubtless taken to school by an elder brother or sister; certainly I was too young to be a pupil. The schoolhouse was a long way from home, — miles and miles it seemed to me. After being in school for hours, I must have grown weary and restless, sitting so motionless and still, for I know that I was boxed on the ears either by the teacher's hand or with a slate. I ran out of the room sobbing and crying, and went down the long white road to my home. I shall never forget that journey in the heat and dust. It must have been the greatest pain and sorrow I had ever known. Doubtless it was the humiliation of being boxed on the ears before the whole school that broke my heart; at least, I felt

as if I never would reach home, and I must have sprinkled every foot of the way with my bitter tears. I remember that teacher's name to-day, and I never forgave her, until a short time ago, after I read Tolstoi. Now I only realize how stupid and ignorant she was to awaken such hatred in the heart of a little child. In those days whipping was a part, and a large part, of the regular course of the district school, and I learned in a few years not to mind it very much,— in fact, rather to enjoy it, for it gave me such good standing with the other children of the school.

How full of illusions and delusions we children were! Since I have grown to man's estate, I have travelled the same road over which I sobbed in that far-off day, and it was really but a very little way, — a short half-mile,— and still, as I look back to that little crying child, it seems as if he must have walked across a desert beneath a tropical sun, and borne all the despair and anguish of the world inside his little jacket.

Another memory that has become a part of my being grows out of the great Civil War. I was probably four or five years old, and was playing under the big maple-trees in our old front yard. The scene all comes back to me as I write. I have a stick or hoop, or perhaps both, in my little hand. No one else is anywhere about. I hear a drum and fife coming over the hill, and I run to the fence and look down the gravelly road. A two-horse wagon

loaded with men and boys, whose names and perhaps faces I seem to know, drives past me as I peer through the palings of the fence. They are dressed in uniform, and are proud and gay. In the centre of the wagon is one boy standing up; I see his face plainly, and catch its boyish smile. They drive past the house to the railroad station, on their way to the Southern battle-fields. I must have been told a great deal about these men and about the war, for my people were abolitionists, who looked upon the rebels as some sort of monsters, and had no thought that there could be any side but ours. However, I now remember nothing at all of what was said to me, but I hear the martial music, I see the horses and wagons and men, and clear and distinct from all the rest is this one boy's face that I knew so well. Even more distinctly do I remember a day some months later. I must then have begun going to the district school, for I remember that there was no school that day. I recall a great throng of people, and among them all the boys and girls from school, and we are gathered inside the burying-ground where they are carrying the young soldier who rode past our house a few months before. I cannot remember what was said at the funeral, but this is the first impression that I can recall of the grim spectre Death. What it meant to my childish mind I cannot now conceive. I remember only the hushed awe and the deep dread that fell upon us all when we realized that they were putting this boy into the

ground and that we should never see his face again. Whatever the feeling, I fancy that time and years have not changed or modified it, or made it any easier to reconcile or understand.

But with the memory of the funeral there lingers an impression that we all thought this young man a glorious, brave, and noble boy, and that his widowed mother and brothers and sisters ought to have felt happy and proud that he was buried in the ground. I remembered the mother for many years, and how she always mourned her son; but it was a long, long time before I came to understand that the fact that the boy was killed upon the field of battle really did not make the sorrow any less for the family left behind. And it was still longer before I came to realize that it is no more noble or honorable to die fighting on the field of battle than in any other way.

CHAPTER III

MY HOME

MY earliest recollections that I can feel quite sure are real are about my family and home. My father was a miller, and had a little grist-mill by the side of the creek, just in the shade of some large oak-trees. His mill must have been very small, for I always knew that he was poor. Still, it seemed to me that the mill was a wonderful affair, almost as large as the big white church that stood upon the hill. It was run by water when the creek was not too low, which I am sure was very often, as I think it over now. Above the mill was a great dam, which made an enormous pond, larger than the Atlantic Ocean, and much more dangerous to any of us boys venturesome enough to go out upon it in a boat, or even on skates in the winter time. But the most marvellous part of all was the wonderful water-wheel hidden almost underneath the mill. It seemed as if there was a great hollow in the ground, to make room for the wheel; and if I had any opinion on the subject, I must have thought that the wheel grew there, for surely no one could make a monster like that. Often I used to go with my father up to the head of the mill-race, when he lifted

the big wooden gate and let the waters come down out of the dam through the race and the wooden flume over the groaning wheel. I well remember how I used to stand in awe and wonder while my father opened the gate, and then run down the path ahead of the rushing tide and peep through a hole to see the old wheel start. Then I would scamper over the mill, from the cellar with its cogs and pulleys, up to the garret with its white dusty chutes and its incomprehensible machines. Then I played around the sacks and bins of wheat and corn, and watched the grain as it streamed into the hopper ready to be ground to pieces by the slowly turning stones.

How real, and still how unreal, all this seems to-day! Is it all a dream? and am I writing a fairy-story like "Little Red Riding Hood" or "The Three Black Bears"? Surely all these events are as clear and vivid as the theatre party of last week. But while I so plainly see the little, idle, prattling child, looking with wondering eyes at the turning wheel, and asking his simple questions of the grave, kind old man in the great white coat, somehow there is no relation between that simple child and the man whom the world has buffeted and tossed for so many years, and with such a rough unfriendly hand, that he cannot help the feeling that this far-off child was really someone else.

My father was a just and upright man,— I can see him now dipping his bent wooden measure into

the hopper of grain and taking out his toll, never a single kernel more than was his due. No doubt the suspicious farmers who brought their sacks of wheat and corn often thought that he dipped out more grain than he had a right to take; and even many of those who knew that he did not, still thought he was a fool because he failed to make the most of the opportunities he had. As I grew up, I learned that there are all sorts of people in the world, and that selfishness and greed and envy are, to say the least, very common in the human heart; but I never could be thankful enough that my father was honest and simple, and that his love of truth and justice had grown into his being as naturally as the oaks were rooted to the earth along the little stream.

The old wheel ceased turning long ago. The last stick of timber in its wondrous mechanism has rotted and decayed; the old mill itself has vanished from the earth. The drying stream and the great mills of the new Northwest long since conspired to destroy my father's simple trade. Even the dam has been washed away, and a tiny thread of water now trickles down over the hill where the rushing flood fell full upon the turning wheel. Last summer I went back to linger, like a ghost, around the old familiar spot; and I found that even the great unexplored pond had dried up, and a field of corn was growing peacefully upon the soil that once upheld this treacherous sea. And the old miller too, with his kindly, simple, honest face,— the old miller with

his white coat,— he too is gone, gone as completely as his father and all the other fathers and grandfathers who have come and gone; the dear, kind old miller, who listened to my childish questions, and taught me, or rather tried to teach me, what was right and wrong, has grown weary and lain down to rest, and will soon be quite forgotten by the world, — unless this story shall bring his son so much fame that some of the glory shall be reflected back to him.

Somehow the mill seems to have made a stronger impression than the house on my young mind. Perhaps it was because it was the only mill that I had ever seen or known; perhaps because the memories that clung to the mill and its surroundings were such as appeal most to the mind of a little child. Of course, from the very nature of things the home and family must have been among my earliest recollections; yet I cannot help feeling that much of the literature about childhood's home has been written for effect,— or not to describe home as it really is to the child, but from someone's ideal of what home ought to be.

I know that my mother was an energetic, hard-working, and in every way strong woman, although I did not know it or think about it then. I know it now, for as I look back to my childhood and see the large family that she cared for, almost without help, I cannot understand how she did it all, especially as she managed to keep well informed on the topics

of the day, and found more time for reading and study than any of her neighbors did.

In the main, I think our family was like the other families of the neighborhood, with about the same dispositions, the same ideas and ideals,— if children can be said to have ideals,— that other people had.

There were seven of us children, and we must have crowded the little home, to say nothing of the little income with which my father and mother raised us all. Our family life was not the ideal home-life of which we read in books; the fact is, I have never seen that sort of life amongst children, — or amongst grown people either, for that matter. If we loved each other, we were all too proud and well-trained to say a word about it, or to make any sign to show that it was true. When a number of us children were together playing the familiar games, we generally quarrelled and fought much more than was our habit when playing with our neighbors and our friends. In this too we were like all the rest of the families that I knew. It seems to me now that a very small matter was always enough to bring on a fight, and that we quarrelled simply because we like to hurt each other; at least I can see no other reason why we did.

We children were supposed to help with the chores around the house; but as near as I can remember, each one was always afraid that he would do more than his share. I recall a story in one of our school readers, which I read when very young;

it was about two brothers, a large one and a small one, and they were carrying a pail on a pole, and the larger brother deliberately shoved the pail nearer to his end, so that the heavier load would fall on him; but I am sure that this incident never happened in our family, or in any other that I ever knew.

Most home-life necessarily clusters around the mother; and so, of course, it must have been in our family. But my mother died when I was in my earlier teens, and her figure has not that clearness that I wish it had. She seems now to have been a remarkable combination of energy and industry, of kindness, and still of strong and controlling will; a woman who, under other conditions of life, and unhampered by so many children and such pressing needs, might have left her mark upon the world. But this was not to be; for she could not overlook the duties that lay nearest her for a broader or more ambitious life.

Both my father and mother must have been kind and gentle and tender to the large family that so sorely taxed their time and strength; and yet, as I look back, I do not have the feeling of closeness that should unite the parent and the child. They were New England people, raised in the Puritan school of life, and I fancy that they would have felt that demonstrations of affection were signs of weakness rather than of love. I have no feeling of a time when either my father or my mother took me, or any other member of our family, in their arms; and

the control of the household seemed to be by such fixed rules as are ordinarily followed in family life, with now and then a resort to rather mild corporal punishment when they thought the occasion grave enough. Both parents were beyond their neighbors in education, intelligence, and strength of character; and with their breadth of view, I cannot understand how they did not see that even the mild force they used tended to cause bitterness and resentment, and thus defeat the object sought. I well remember that we were all glad if our parents, or either of them, were absent for a day; not that they were unkind, but that with them we felt restraint, and never that spirit of love and trust which ought always to be present between the parent and the child.

While I cannot recall that my mother ever gave me a kiss or a caress, and while I am sure that I should have been embarrassed if she had, still I remember that when I had a fever, and lay on my bed for what seemed endless weeks, she let no one else come near me by day or night. And although she must have attended to all her household duties, she seemed ever beside me with the tenderest and gentlest touch. I can still less remember any great affection that I had for her, or any effort on my part to make her life easier than it was; yet I know that I must have loved her, for I can never forget the bitterness of my despair and grief when they told me she must die. And even now, as I look back after all these weary years, when I think of her lying

cold and dead in the still front room I feel almost the same shudder and horror that filled my heart as a little child. And with this shudder comes the endless regret that I did not tell her that I loved her, and do more to lighten the burdens of her life.

This family feeling, or lack of it, I think must have come from the Puritanic school in which my father and mother were born and raised. It must be that any intelligent parent who really understands life would be able to make his children feel a companionship greater than any other they could know.

With my brothers and sisters my life was much the same. We never said anything about our love for each other, and our nearness seemed to bring out our antagonism more than our love. Still, I am sure that I really cared for them, for I recall that once when a brother was very ill I was wretched with fear and grief. I remember how I went over every circumstance of our relations with each other, and how I vowed that I would always be kind and loving to him if his life were saved. Fortunately, he got well; but I cannot recall that I treated him any better after his sickness than before.

I remember how happy all of us used to be when cousins or friends came to stay a few days in our house, and how much more we liked to be with them than with our own family. I remember, too, that I had the same feeling when I visited other houses; and I have found it so to this day. True it is, that in great trouble or in a crisis of life we seem to cling

to our kindred, and stand by them, and expect them to stand by us; and yet, in the little things, day by day, we look for our comradeship and affection somewhere else.

So I think that in all of this neither I nor the rest of my people were different from the other families about us, and that the stories of the ideal life of brothers and sisters, of parents and children, are largely myths.

CHAPTER IV

MY FATHER

MY father was a strong believer in education,— that is, in the learning that is found in books. He was doubtful of any other sort, if indeed he believed there could be any other sort. His strong faith in books, together with the fact that there were so many of us children around the house in my mother's way, early drove me to the district school.

Before this time I had learned to read simple sentences; for I cannot remember when my father began telling me how important and necessary it was to study books. By some strange trick of fortune, he was born with a quenchless thirst for learning. This love of books was the one great passion of his life; but his large family began to arrive when he was at such an early age that he never had time to prepare himself to make a living from his learning. He always felt the hardship and irony of a life of labor to one who loved study and contemplation; so he resolved that his children should have a better chance. Poor man! I can see him now as plainly as if it were yesterday. I can see him with his books,— English, Latin, Greek, and even He-

brew,— carrying them back and forth to the dusty mill, and snatching the smallest chance, even when the water was spilling over the dam, to learn more of the wonders that were held between the covers of these books.

All my life I have felt that Nature had some grudge against my father. If she had made him a simple miller, content when he was grinding corn and dipping the small toll from the farmer's grist, he might have lived a fairly useful, happy life. But day after day and year after year he was compelled to walk the short and narrow path between the little house and the decaying mill, while his mind was roving over scenes of great battles, decayed empires, dead languages, and the starry heavens above. To his dying day he lived in a walking trance; and his books and their wondrous stories were more real to him than the turning water-wheel, the sacks of wheat and corn, and the cunning, soulless farmers who dickered and haggled about his hard-earned toll.

Whether or not my father had strong personal ambitions, I really never knew; no doubt he had, but years of work and resignation had taught him to deny them even to himself, and slowly and pathetically he must have let go his hold upon that hope and ambition which alone make the thoughtful man cling fast to life.

In all the country round, no man knew so much of books as he, and no man knew less of life. The

old parson and the doctor were almost the only neighbors who seemed able even to understand the language that he spoke. I remember now, when his work was done, how religiously he went to his little study with his marvellous books, and worked and read far into the night, stopping only to encourage and help his children in the tasks that they were ever anxious to neglect and shirk. My bedroom, with its two beds and generally four occupants, opened directly from his study door; and no matter how often I went to sleep and awakened in the night, I could see a streak of lamplight at the bottom of the door that opened into his room, which showed me that he was still dwelling in the fairylands of which his old volumes told. He was no longer there in the morning, and this was usually the first time that I missed him in my waking moments after I had gone to bed. Often, too, he wrote, sometimes night after night for weeks together; but I never knew what it was that he put down,— no doubt his hopes and dreams and loves and doubts and fears, as men have ever done since time began, as they will ever do while time shall last, and as I am doing now; but these poor dreams of his were never destined to see the light of day. Perhaps, with no one to tell him that they were good, he despaired about their worth, as so many other doubting souls have done before and since. It is not likely that any publisher could have been found ready to transform his poor cramped writing

into print. Whatever may have been the case, if I could only find the pages that he wrote I would print them now with his name upon the title-page, and pay for them myself.

I cannot remember when I learned to read. I seem always to have known how. I am sure that I learned my letters from the red and blue blocks that were always scattered on the floor. Of course, I did not know what they meant; I only knew that A was A, and was content with that. Even when I learned my first little words, and put them into simple sentences, I fancy that I knew no more of what they meant than the poor caged parrot that keeps saying over and over again, "Polly wants a cracker," when he really wants nothing of the kind. I fancy that I knew nothing of what they meant, for as I read to-day many of the brave lessons learned even in my later life I cannot imagine that I had any thought of their meaning such as the language seems now to hold.

But I know that I learned my letters quickly and early,— though not so early as an elder brother who was always kept steadily before my eyes. It must be that my father gave me little chance to tarry long from one simple book to another, for I remember that at a very early age I was told again and again that John Stuart Mill began studying Greek when he was only three years old. I thought then, as I do to-day, that he must have had a cruel father, and that this unnatural parent not only made mis-

erable the life of his little boy, but of thousands of other boys whose fathers could see no reason why their sons should be outdone by John Stuart Mill. I have no doubt that my good father thought that all his children ought to be able to do anything that was ever accomplished by John Stuart Mill; and so he did his part, and more, to make us try.

But, after all, I feel to-day just as I did long years ago, when with reluctant ear and rebellious heart I heard of the great achievements of John Stuart Mill. I look back to those early years, and still regret the beautiful playspells that were broken and the many fond childish schemes for pleasure that were shattered because John Stuart Mill began studying Greek when only three years old.

I would often shed bitter tears, and mutter exclamations and protests which no one heard, but which were none the less terrible because they were spoken underneath my breath,— and all on account of John Stuart Mill. It was long before I could forgive my gentle honest father for having tried so hard to make me learn those books. I am sure that no good fortune can ever make up for the wasted joys, the broken playtimes, the interrupted childish pleasures, which I should have had.

If I were writing this story as I feel to-day, and if I could not recall the little child who had so lately come from the heart of Nature that he still must have remembered what she felt and thought and knew, I might not regret those broken childish joys.

I might rather mourn and lament, with all the teachers and parents and authors, that I was so profligate of my time when I was yet a child, and that I was not more studious in those far-off years. But as I look back to my childhood days, my sluggish heart beats quicker, and I can feel the warm young blood rush to my tingling feet and hands, and I realize once more the strange thrill of delight and joy that life and activity alone bring to all the young. And so I cling to-day to the childish thought that I was right and my poor father wrong. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things," said the apostle twenty centuries ago. The mistake of maturity and age has ever been that it lives so wholly in the present and so completely forgets the childhood that is past. To guard infancy and youth as a precious heritage, to keep them as long as we can, seems to me the true philosophy of life. For, after all, life is mostly illusions, and the illusions of infancy and childhood and youth are more alluring than those of later years.

But I fancy now that I can understand my father's thoughts. A strange fate had set him down beside the little winding creek and kept him at his humble task of tolling his neighbors' grist. He looked at the high hills to the east, and the high hills to the west, and up and down the narrow country road that led to the outside world. He knew that beyond the high hills was a broad inviting plain, with oppor-

tunity and plenty, with fortune and fame; but as he looked at the hills he could see no way to pass beyond. It is possible that he could have walked over them, or even around them, had he been alone; but there was the ever-growing brood that held him in the narrow place. No doubt as he grew older he often looked up and down the long dusty road, half expecting some fairy or genie to come along and take him away where he might realize his dreams; but of course no such thing ever happened,— for this is a real story,— and so he stayed and ground the grain in the old decaying mill.

My father must have been quite advanced in years before he wholly gave up his ambitions to do something in life besides grinding the farmers' corn. Indeed, I am not sure that he ever gave them up; but doubtless, as the task seemed more hopeless and the chain grew stronger, he slowly looked to his children to satisfy the dreams that life once held out to him; and so this thought mingled with the rest in his strong endeavor that we should all have the best education he could get for us, so that we need not be millers as he had been. Well, none of us are millers! The old family is scattered far and wide; the last member of the little band long since passed down the narrow road, and out between the great high hills into the far-off land of freedom and opportunity of which my father dreamed. But I should be glad to believe to-day that a single one over whom he watched with such jealous care ever

gave as much real service to the world as this simple, kindly man whose name was heard scarcely farther than the water that splashed and tumbled on the turning wheel.

I started bravely to tell about my life,— to write my story as it seems to me; and here I am halting and rambling like a garrulous old man over the feelings and remembrances of long ago. By a strange trick of memory I seem to stand for a few moments out in the old front yard, a little barefoot child. The long summer twilight has grown dim, and the quiet country evening is at hand. Beyond the black trees I hear the falling water spilling over the wooden dam; and farther on, around the edges of the pond, the hoarse croak of the frogs sounds clear and harsh in the still night air. Above the little porch that shelters the front door is my father's study window. I look in and see him sitting at his desk with his shaded lamp; before him is the everlasting book, and his pale face and long white hair bend over the infatuating pages with all the confidence and trust of a little child. For a simple child he was, from the time when he first saw the light until his friends and comrades lowered him into the sandy loam of the old churchyard. I see him through the little panes of glass, as he bends above the book. The chapter is finished and he wakens from his reverie into the world in which he lives and works; he takes off his iron-framed spectacles, lays down his book, comes downstairs and calls me away

from my companions with the old story that it is time to come into the house and get my lessons. For the thousandth time I protest that I want to play,— to finish my unending game; and again he tells me no, that John Stuart Mill began studying Greek when he was only three years old. And with heavy heart and muttered imprecations on John Stuart Mill, I am taken away from my companions and my play, and set down beside my father with my book. I can feel even now my sorrow and despair, as I leave my playmates and turn the stupid leaves. But I would give all that I possess to-day to hear my father say again, as in that far-off time, "John Stuart Mill began studying Greek when he was only three years old."

CHAPTER V

THE DISTRICT SCHOOL

IN the last chapter I intended to write about the district school; but I lingered so long over old remembrances that I could not get to school in time, so now I will go straight there without delay.

The first school that I remember was not in the little town near which we lived, but about half a mile away in the opposite direction. Our house must have stood just outside the limits of the little village; at any rate, I was sent to the country school. Every morning we children were given a dinner-pail packed full of pie and cake, and now and then a piece of bread and butter (which I always let the other children eat), and were sent off to school. As we passed along the road we were joined by other little boys and girls, and by the time we reached the building our party contained nearly all the children on the road travelling in the direction from which we came. We were a boisterous, thoughtless crowd, — that is, the boys; the girls were quieter and more reserved, which we called " proud."

Almost as soon as the snow was off the ground in the spring, we boys took off our shoes (or, rather, boots) and went barefooted to the school. It was hard for us to wait until our parents said the ground

was warm enough for us to take off our boots; we felt so light and free, and could run so fast barefooted, that we always begged our mother to let us leave them off at the very earliest chance. The chief disadvantage was that we often stubbed our toes. This was sometimes serious, when we were running fast and would bring them full tilt against a stone. Most of the time we managed to have one or more toes tied up in rags; and we found much pleasure in comparing our wounds, to see whose were the worst, or which were getting well the fastest. The next most serious trouble connected with going barefoot was the necessity for washing our feet every night before we went to bed. This seemed a grievous hardship; sometimes we would forget it, when we could, and I remember now and then being called up out of bed after I thought I had safely escaped and seemed to be sound asleep, and when my feet were clean enough without being washed.

It seemed to us children that our mother was unreasonably particular about this matter of washing our feet before we went to bed. She always required it when we had been barefoot through the day, even though it had been raining and we had wiped our feet in the grass. Still the trouble of washing our feet was partly made up by our not being obliged to put on or take off our stockings and our boots. This was a great relief, especially in the morning; for this part of our toilet took

longer than all the rest, and when the time came around to go barefoot we had only to jump into a few clothes and start away.

In the summer-time it took a long while for us children to travel the short half-mile to the district school. No matter how early we left home, it was nearly always past the hour of nine when we reached the door. For there were birds in the trees and stones in the road, and no child ever knew any pain except his own. There were little fishes in the creek over which we slid in winter and through which we waded in the summer-time; then there were chipmunks on the fences and woodchucks in the fields, and no boy could ever go straight to school, or straight back home after the day was done. The procession of barefoot urchins laughed and joked, and fought, and ran, and bragged, and gave no thought to study or to books until the bell was rung and they were safely seated in the room. Then we watched and waited eagerly for recess; and after that, still more anxiously for the hour of noon, which was always the best time by far of all the day, not alone because of the pie and cake and apples and cheese which the more prudent and obedient of us saved until this time, but also because of the games, in which we had enough boys to go around.

In these games the girls did not join to any great extent; in fact, girls seemed of little use to the urchins who claimed everything as their own. In the school they were seated by themselves on one side

of the room, and sometimes when we failed to study as we should we were made to go and sit with them. This was when we were very young. As we grew older, this form of punishment seemed less and less severe, until some other was substituted in its stead. Most of the boys were really rather bashful with the girls,— those who bragged the loudest and fought the readiest somehow never knew just what to say when they were near. We preferred rather to sit and look at them, and wonder how they could be so neat and clean and well " fixed up." I remember when quite a small boy how I used to look over toward their side of the room, especially at a little girl with golden hair that was always hanging in long curls about her head; and it seemed to me that nothing could ever be quite so beautiful as this curly head; which may explain the fact that all my life nothing has seemed quite so beguiling as golden hair, — unless it were black, or brown, or some other kind.

To the boys, school had its chief value, in fact its only value, in its games and sports. Of course, our parents and teachers were always urging us to work. In their efforts to make us study, they resorted to every sort of means — headmarks, presents, praise, flattery, Christmas cards, staying in at recess, staying after school, corporal punishment, all sorts of persuasion, threats, and even main force — to accomplish this result. No like rewards or punishments were required to make us play; which fact, it

seems to me, should have shown our teachers and parents that play, exercise, activity, and change are the law of life, especially the life of a little child; and that study, as we knew it, was unnatural and wrong. Still, nothing of this sort ever dawned upon their minds.

I cannot remember much real kindness between the children of the school; while we had our special chums, we never seemed to care for them, except that boys did not like to be alone. There were few things a boy could do alone, excepting tasks, which of course we avoided if we could. On our way to and from the school, or while together at recess and noon, while we played the ordinary games a very small matter brought on a quarrel, and we always seemed to be watching for a chance to fight. In the matter of our quarrels and fights we showed the greatest impartiality, as boys do in almost all affairs of life.

While our books were filled with noble precepts, we never seemed to remember them when we got out of doors, or even to think that they had any application to our lives. In this respect the boy and the grown-up man seem wonderfully alike.

But really, school was not all play. Our teachers and parents tried their best to make us learn,— that is, to make us learn the lessons in the books. The outside lessons we always seemed to get without their help,— in fact, in spite of their best endeavors to prevent our knowing what they meant.

The fact that our teachers tried so hard to make us learn was no doubt one of the chief reasons why we looked on them as our natural enemies. We seldom had the same teacher for two terms of school, and we always wondered whether the new one would be worse or better than the old. We started in prepared to find her worse; and the first kind words we ever had for our teacher were spoken after she was gone and we compared her with the new one in her place. Our teachers seemed to treat us pretty well for the first few days. They were then very kind and sweet; they hardly ever brought switches to the school until the second week, but we were always sure that they would be called into service early in the term. No old-time teacher would have dreamed that she could get through a term of school without a whip, any more than a judge would believe that society could get along without a jail. The methods that were used to make us learn, and the things we were taught, seem very absurd as I look back upon them now; and still, I presume, they were not different from the means employed to-day.

Most of us boys could learn arithmetic fairly well, — in this, indeed, we always beat the girls. Still, some parts of arithmetic were harder than the rest. I remember that I mastered the multiplication-table up to "twelve times twelve," backwards and forwards and every other way, at a very early age, and I fancy that this knowledge has clung to me through life; but I cannot forget the many weary hours I

spent trying to learn the tables of weights and measures, and how much vexation of spirit I endured before my task was done. However, after weary weeks and months I learned them so well that I could say them with the greatest ease. This was many, many years ago; since that time I have found my place in the world of active life, but I cannot now remember that even once have I had occasion to know or care about the difference between "Troy weight" and "Apothecaries' weight," if, in fact, there was any difference at all. And one day, last week I think it was, for the first time in all these endless years I wished to know how many square rods made an acre, and I tried to call back the table that I learned so long ago at school; but as to this my mind was an utter blank, and all that I could do was to see the little girl with the golden locks sitting at her desk — and, by the way, I wonder where she is to-day. But I took a dictionary from the shelf, and there I found it plain and straight, and I made no effort to keep it in my mind, knowing that if perchance in the uncertain years that may be yet to come I shall need to know again, I will find it there in the dictionary safe and sound.

And all those examples that I learned to cipher out! I am sure I know more to-day than the flaxen-haired barefoot boy who used to sit at his little desk at school and only drop his nibbled slate-pencil to drive the flies away from his long bare legs, but I could not do those sums to-day even if one of my

old-time teachers should come back from her long-forgotten grave and threaten to keep me in for the rest of my life unless I got the answer right.

And then the geography! How hard they tried to make us learn this book, and how many recesses were denied us because we were not sure just which river in Siberia was the longest! Of course we knew nothing about Siberia, or whether the rivers ran water or blood; but we were forced to know which was the largest and just how long it was. And so all over the great round world we travelled, to find cities, towns, rivers, mountain ranges, peninsulas, oceans, and bays. How important it all was! I remember that one of the ways they took to make us learn this book was to have us sing geography in a chorus of little voices. I can recall to-day how one of those old tunes began, but I remember little beyond the start. The song was about the capitals of all the States, and it began, "State of Maine, Augusta, is on the Kennebec River," and so on through the whole thirty-three or four, or whatever the number was when I was a little child. Well, many, many years have passed away since then, and I have wandered far and wide from my old-time country home. There are few places in the United States that I have not seen, in my quest for activity and change. I have even stood on some of the highest peaks of the Alps, and looked down upon its quiet valleys and its lovely lakes; but I have never yet been to Augusta on the Kennebec River in the

State of Maine, and it begins to look as if I never should. Still, if Fortune ever takes me there, I shall be very glad that I learned when yet a child at school that Augusta was the capital of Maine and on the Kennebec River. So, too, I have never been to Siberia, and, not being a Russian, I presume that I shall never go. And in fact, wherever I have wandered on the earth I have had to learn my geography all over new again.

But, really, grammar made me more trouble than any other study. Somehow I never could learn grammar, and it always made me angry when I tried. My parents and teachers told me that I could never write or speak unless I learned grammar, and so I tried and tried, but even now I can hardly tell an adverb from an adjective, and I do not know that I care. When a little boy, I used to think that if I really had anything to tell I could make myself understood; and I think so still. The longer I live the surer I am that the chief trouble of writers and speakers is the lack of interesting thoughts, and not of proper words. Certainly grammar was a hideous nightmare to me when a child at school. Of all the parts of speech the verb was the most impossible to get. I remember now how difficult it was to conjugate the verb "to love," which the books seemed always to put first. How I stumbled and blundered as I tried to learn that verb! I might possibly have mastered the present tense, but when it came to all the different moods and various tenses it was a hope-

less task. I am much older now, but somehow that verb has never grown easier with the fleeting years. The past-perfect tense has always been well-nigh impossible to learn. I never could tell when it left off, or whether it ever left off or not. Neither have I been able to keep it separate from the present, or, for that matter, from the future. A few years after the district school, I went for a brief time to the Academy on the hill, where I studied Latin; and I remember that this same verb was there, with all the old complications and many that were new, to greet me when I came. To be sure, it had been changed to " Amo, Amas, Amat," but it was the old verb just the same, and its various moods and tenses caused me the same trouble that I had experienced as a little child. My worry over this word has made me wonder whether this verb, in all its moods and tenses, was not one of the many causes of the downfall of the Roman Republic, of which we used to hear so much. At any rate, I long since ceased trying to get it straight or keep it straight; indeed, I am quite sure that it was designed only to tangle and ensnare.

CHAPTER VI

THE SCHOOL READERS

IF we scholars did not grow up to be exemplary men and women, it surely was not the fault of our teachers or our parents,— or of the school-book publishers.

When I look back to those lessons that we learned, I marvel that I ever wandered from the straight path in the smallest possible degree. Whether we were learning to read or write, studying grammar or composition, in whatever book we chanced to take, there was the moral precept plain on every page. Our many transgressions could have come only from the fact that we really did not know what these lessons meant; and doubtless our teachers also never thought they had any sort of relation to our lives.

How these books were crammed with noble thoughts! In them every virtue was extolled and every vice condemned. I wonder now how the book publishers could ever have printed such tales, or how they reconciled themselves to the hypocrisy they must have felt when they sold the books.

This moral instruction concerned certain general themes. First of all, temperance was the great lesson taught. I well remembered that we children believed that the first taste of liquor was the fatal

one; and we never even considered that one drop could be taken without leading us to everlasting ruin and despair. There were the alms-house, the jail, and the penitentiary square, in front of every child who even considered taking the first drink; while all the rewards of this world and the next were freely promised to the noble lad who should resist.

As I look back to-day, it seems as if every moral lesson in the universe must have grown into my being from those books. How could I have ever wandered from the narrow path? I look back to those little freckled, trifling boys and girls, and I hear them read their lessons in their books so long ago. The stories were all the same, from the beginning to the end. We began in the primer, and our instruction in reading and good conduct did not end until the covers of the last book were closed.

It seems to me to-day that I can hear those little urchins reading about the idle lazy boy who tried to get the bee and the cow and the horse to play with him,— though what he wanted of the bee I could never understand,— but they were all too busy with their work, and so he ran away from school and had a most miserable day alone. How could we children ever stay away from school after we had read this lesson? And yet, I cannot now recall that it made us love our books, or think one whit less of the free breeze, the waving grass and trees, or the alluring coaxing sun.

We were taught by our books that we must on all

accounts speak the truth; that we must learn our lessons; that we must love our parents and our teachers; must enjoy work; must be generous and kind; must despise riches; must avoid ambition; and then, if we did all these things, some fairy godmother would come along at just the darkest hour and give us everything our hearts desired. Not one story in the book told how any good could ever come from wilfulness, or selfishness, or greed, or that any possible evil ever grew from thrift, or diligence, or generosity, or kindness. And yet, in spite of all these precepts, we were young savages, always grasping for the best, ever fighting and scheming to get the advantage of our playmates, our teachers, and our tasks.

A quarter of a century seems not to have wrought much change; we still believe in the old moral precepts, and teach them to others, but we still strive to get the best of everything for ourselves.

I wonder if the old school-readers have been changed since I was a boy at school. Are the same lessons there to-day? We were such striking examples of what the books would not do that one would almost think the publishers would drop the lessons out.

I try to recall the feelings of one child who read those stories in the little white school-house by the country road. What did they mean to me? Did I laugh at them, as I do to-day? Or did I really think that they were true, and try and try, and then

fail in all I tried, as I do now? I presume the latter was the case; yet for my life I cannot recall the thoughts and feelings that these stories brought to me. But I can still recall the stories.

I remember, as if it were yesterday, the story about the poor widow of Pine Cottage, in the winter, with her five ragged children hovering around her little table. Widows usually had large families then, and most of their boys were lame. This poor widow had at last reached the point where starvation faced her little brood. She had tasted no food for twenty-four hours. Her one small herring was roasting on the dying coals. The prospect was certainly very dark; but she had faith, and somehow felt that in the end she would come out all right. A knock is heard at the back door. A ragged stranger enters and asks for food; the poor widow looks at her five starving children, and then she gives the visitor the one last herring; he eats it, and lo and behold! the stranger is her long-lost son,—probably one that was left over from the time when she was a widow before. The long-lost son came in this disguise to find out whether or not his mother really loved him. He was, in fact, rich; but he had borrowed the rags at the tavern, and had just arrived from India with a ship-load of gold, which he at once divided among his mother and brothers and sisters. How could any child fail to be generous after this? And yet I venture to say that if any of us took a herring to school for dinner the day that

we read this story in our class, we clung to it as tenaciously as a miser to his gold.

Then there was the widow with her one lame son, who asks the rich merchant for a little charity. He listens to her pathetic story, and believes she tells the truth. He asks her how much she needs. She tells him that five dollars will be enough. He writes a check, and tells her to go across the street to the bank. She takes it over without reading it. The banker counts out fifty dollars. She says, "There is a mistake; I only asked for five dollars." The banker goes across the street to find out the truth, and the merchant says: "Yes, there was a mistake, I should have made it five hundred,"— which he straightway does. Thus honesty and virtue are rewarded once again. I have lived many years and travelled in many lands, and have seen more or less of human nature and of suffering and greed; I have seen many poor widows,— but have never yet come across the generous merchant.

There was no end to the good diligent boys and girls of whom the readers told; they were on every page we turned, and every one of them received his or her reward and received it right away in cash. There never was the slightest excuse or need for us to be anything but diligent and kind,— and still our young hearts were so perverse and hard that we let the lessons pass unheeded, and clutched at the smallest piece of pie or cake, or the slightest opportunity to deceive some good kind teacher, although we

must have known that we missed a golden chance to become President of the United States and have money in the bank besides.

One story of a contented boy stands out so clearly in my mind that I could not refrain from hunting up the old schoolbook and reading it once more. It must have made a wonderful impression on my mind, for there it is, "The Contented Boy." I cannot recall that I ever was contented in my life, and I am sure that I have never seen a boy like this one in the reader; but it is not possible that I knew my schoolbooks were clumsy, stupid lies. After all this time there is the story, clear and distinct; and this is the way it runs:

THE CONTENTED BOY.

Mr. Lenox was riding by himself. He got off from his horse to look at something on the roadside. The horse broke away from him and ran off. Mr. Lenox ran after him, but could not catch him.

A little boy at work in a field, near the road, heard the horse. As soon as he saw him running from his master, the boy ran very quickly to the middle of the road, and catching the horse by the bridle, stopped him till Mr. Lenox came up.

MR. LENOX. Thank you, my good boy. What shall I give you for your trouble?

BOY. I want nothing, sir.

MR. L. You want nothing? Few men can say as much. But what were you doing in the field?

BOY. I was rooting up weeds, and tending the sheep that were feeding on turnips.

MR. L. Do you like to work?

BOY. Yes, sir, very well, this fine weather.

MR. L. But would you not rather play?

BOY. This is not hard work. It is almost as good as play.

MR. L. Who set you to work?

BOY. My father, sir.

MR. L. What is your name?

BOY. Peter Hurdle, sir.

MR. L. How old are you?

BOY. Eight years old next June.

MR. L. How long have you been here?

BOY. Ever since six o'clock this morning.

MR. L. Are you not hungry?

BOY. Yes, sir, but I shall go to dinner soon.

MR. L. If you had a dime now, what would you do with it?

BOY. I don't know, sir. I never had so much.

MR. L. Have you no playthings?

BOY. Playthings? What are they?

MR. L. Such things as ninepins, marbles, tops, and wooden horses.

BOY. No, sir. Tom and I play at football in winter, and I have a jumping-rope. I had a hoop, but it is broken.

MR. L. Do you want nothing else?

BOY. I have hardly time to play with what I have.

MR. L. You could get apples and cakes if you had money, you know.

BOY. I can have apples at home. As for cake, I don't want that. My mother makes me a pie now and then, which is as good.

MR. L. Would you not like a knife to cut sticks?

BOY. I have one. Here it is. Brother Tom gave it to me.

MR. L. Your shoes are full of holes. Don't you want a new pair?

BOY. I have a better pair for Sundays.

MR. L. But these let in water.

BOY. I do not mind that, sir.

MR. L. Your hat is all torn, too.

BOY. I have a better one at home.

MR. L. What do you do if you are hungry before it is time to go home?

BOY. I sometimes eat a raw turnip.

MR. L. But if there are none?

BOY. Then I do as well as I can without. I work on and never think of it.

MR. L. I am glad to see that you are so contented. Were you ever at school?

BOY. No, sir. But father means to send me next winter.

MR. L. You will want books then.

BOY. Yes, sir; each boy has a spelling-book, a reader, and a Testament.

MR. L. Then I will give them to you. Tell your father so, and that it is because you are an obliging, contented little boy.

BOY. I will, sir. Thank you.

MR. L. Good-bye, Peter.

BOY. Good-morning, sir.

One other story that has seemed particularly to impress itself upon my mind was about two boys, one named James and the other named John. I believe that these were their names, though possibly one was William and the other Henry. Anyhow,

their uncle gave them each a parcel of books. James took out his pocket-knife and cut the fine whipcord that bound his package, but John slowly and patiently untied his string and then rolled it into a nice little ball (the way a nice little boy would do) and carefully put it in his pocket. Some years after, there was a great shooting tournament, and James and John were both there with their bows and arrows; it was late in the game, and so far it was a tie. James seized his last arrow and bent his bow; the string broke and the prize was lost. The book does not tell us that in this emergency John offered his extra piece of whipcord to his brother; instead, the model prudent brother took up his last arrow, bent his bow, when, lo and behold! his string broke too; whereupon John reached into his pocket and pulled out the identical cord that he had untied so long ago, put it on the bow, and of course won the prize!

That miserable story must have cost me several years of valuable time, for ever since I first read it I have always tried to untie every knot that I could find; and although I have ever carefully tucked away all sorts of odd strings into my pockets, I never attended a shooting-match or won a prize in all my life.

One great beauty of the lessons which our school readers taught was the directness and certainty and promptness of the payment that came as a reward of good conduct. Then, too, the recompense was

in no way uncertain or ethereal, but was always paid in cash, or something just as material and good. Neither was any combination of circumstances too remote or troublesome or impossible to be brought about. Everything in the universe seemed always ready to conspire to reward virtue and punish vice.

I well remember one story which thus clearly proved that good deeds must be rewarded, and that however great the trouble the payment would not be postponed even for a day.

It seems that a good boy named Henry — I believe the book did not give his other name — started out one morning to walk about five miles away to do an errand for his sick father. I think it was his father, though it may possibly have been his mother or grandmother. Well, Henry had only got fairly started on his journey when he met a half-starved dog; and thereupon the boy shared with the dog the dinner that he was carrying in his little basket. Of course I know now that, however great his kindness, he could not have relieved the dog unless he had happened to be carrying his dinner in a little basket; but my childish mind was not subtle enough to comprehend it then. After relieving the dog, Henry went on his way with a lighter heart and a lighter basket. Soon he came upon a sick horse lying upon the ground. Henry feared that if he stayed to doctor the horse he would not get home until after dark; but this made no sort of difference to him, so he pulled some grass and took it to the

horse, and then went to the river and got some water in his hat (it must have been a Panama) and gave this to the horse to drink, and having done his duty went on his way. He had gone only a short distance farther when he saw a blind man standing in a pond of water. (How the blind man got into the pond of water the story does not tell,— the business of the story was not getting him in but getting him out.) Thereupon little Henry waded into the pond and led the blind man to the shore. Any other boy would simply have called out to the man, and let him come ashore himself. Of course, if Henry had been a bad boy, and his name had been Tom, he would have been found leading the blind man into the pond instead of out, and then of course he (Tom) would have taken pneumonia and died.

But Henry's adventures did not end here. He had gone only a little way farther when he met a poor cripple, who had been fighting in some war and who was therefore a hero, and this cripple was very hungry. Henry promptly gave him all the dinner he had saved from his interview with the dog; and having finished this further act of charity, he at last hurried on to do his errand. But he had worked so long in the Good Samaritan business that by the time he started home it began to get dark. Then, of course, he soon reached a great forest, which added to his troubles. After wandering about for a long time in the darkness and the woods, he sat down in hunger and despair. Thereupon his

old friend the dog came into the wood and up to the tree where Henry sat, and he found that the dog carried some bread and meat nicely pinned up in a napkin in payment for the breakfast given him in the morning. How the dog had managed to pin the napkin, the story does not tell. After eating his supper, Henry got up and wandered farther into the woods. He was just despairing a second time, when by the light of the moon he saw the horse that he had fed in the morning. The horse took him on his back and carried him out of the wood; but the poor boy's troubles were not yet done. He was passing along a lane, when two robbers seized him and began stripping off his clothes; then the dog came up and bit one robber, who thereupon left Henry and ran after the dog (presumably so that he might get bitten again), and just then some one shouted from the hedge and scared the other robber off. Henry looked toward the hedge in the darkness, and, behold! there was the crippled soldier riding on the back of the blind man,— and in this way they had all come together to save Henry and pay him for being such a good little boy.

When such efforts as these could be put forth for the instant reward of virtue, where was there a possible inducement left to tempt the most wayward child to sin?

Not only good conduct, but religion, was taught to us children in the same direct and simple way. Nothing seemed to pay better than Sabbath observ-

ance, according to the strict rules that obtained when I was young.

I remember the story of a barber who was doing a "thriving business" in an English city. He was obliged to shave his customers on Sunday morning (possibly in order that they might look well at church). However, one Sunday the barber went to church himself; and, as it so happened, the minister that day preached a sermon about Sabbath observance. This made so deep an impression on the barber's mind that he straightway refused to do any more shaving on Sunday. Thereupon he was obliged to close his shop in the aristocratic neighborhood where he had lived, and rent a basement amongst the working people who did not go to church and hence had no need of a Sunday shave.

One Saturday night a "pious lawyer" came to town and inquired in great haste where he could find a barber-shop, and was directed to this basement for a shave. The "pious lawyer" told the barber that he must have his work done that night, as he would not be shaved on the Sabbath day. This at once impressed the barber, who was then so poor that he was obliged to borrow a halfpenny from his customer for a candle before he could give him the shave. When the "pious lawyer" learned of the barber's straits, and what had been the cause, he was so deeply moved that he gave him a half-crown, and asked his name. The barber promptly answered that it was William Reed. At this the

lawyer opened his eyes,— doubtless through professional instinct,— and asked from what part of the country the barber had come. When he answered, from Kingston, near Taunton, the lawyer's eyes opened wider still. Then he asked the name of the barber's father, and if he had other relatives. The barber told his father's name, and said that he once had an "Uncle James," who had gone to India many years before and had not been heard from since. Then the "pious lawyer" answered: "If this is true, I have glorious news for you. Your uncle is dead, and he has left a fortune which comes to you." It is needless to add that the barber got the money, — and of course the death of the uncle and the good luck of the nephew were entirely due to the fact that the barber would not shave a customer on the Sabbath day.

Well, those were marvellous tales on which our young minds fed. I wonder now which is the more real,— the world outside as it seemed to us in our young school-days, or that same enchanted land our childhood knew, as we look back upon the scene through the gathering haze that the fleeting years have brought before our eyes!

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

SCHOOL had at least two days that made us as happy as children could well be. One was the first day of the term, and the other was the last. Anxious days and weeks and much nervous expectation led up to the first day of school; we wondered what our teacher would be like, and eagerly picked up and told and retold all the gossip that floated from her last place as to her good points and her bad,— especially her bad. Then there was always the question as to what pupils would be at school; what new faces we should see and what old ones would be gone, and whether or not we should like the new ones better than the old. Our minds were firmly made up on this point before we went to school, and no possible circumstance could make us change the opinion, or rather the determination, we had formed. Then we speculated and negotiated as to who should be our seat-mate for the term, or until we fought. There was always the question of studies and classes, and whether the new teacher would let us begin where the old left off, or whether we should have to commence the book over again. We almost always began again, and thus the first parts of our books were badly worn and

thumbed, while the pages in the back were fresh and new.

We looked forward to the last day with all the expectancy of the first. Long before this the work began to drag; the novelty had all worn off, and our life was a constant battle with the teacher to see how much we need not do. As the last day drew near, our minds were filled with visions of how easy life would be when there was no school, and of the pleasure the summer held in store for us. On the last day we had no lessons to recite, and in the afternoon our parents were invited in, and we spoke pieces and read essays,— that is, the boys generally spoke the pieces and the girls read the essays. Somehow a boy never could write an essay, and even if he could manage to write one it would be beneath his dignity to stand up on the platform and read from little sheets of note-paper tied with red or blue ribbon. But this task seemed especially to fit the girls. In the first place, they could write better than the boys, — letters or essays or anything of the kind. In the next place, they could not be thought of as standing bolt upright and facing the whole school, visitors and all; they were too shy to stand out alone with nothing in their hands to hide their faces. So the girls read essays on Success, and Work, and Truthfulness, and Spring, and things like that, while the boys spoke pieces. Sometimes we were afraid, but after a little practice we promptly answered to our names, and went on the platform and spoke with the

greatest assurance, holding our heads up and making the gestures according to printed forms laid down in the books.

I fancy that none of us ever really understood anything about the pieces that we spoke. I remember in a general way that they were mainly of our country, and brave boys fighting and winning victories and dying, and about the evils and dangers of strong drink. We had a great many pieces about intemperance, ambition, and the like. I especially remember one boy, with red hair and freckles and a short neck and large warts on his hands, who used always to speak a piece entitled "How have the Mighty Fallen." I don't know who wrote it, or where it came from, or what has become of it; but I remember the piece almost as well as if I heard it yesterday. This boy was the prize speaker of the school, and the piece told about Alexander and Cæsar and Napoleon, and how and why they failed. Their lack of success was due to ambition and strong drink. I know this piece made a deep impression on my mind, and I always vowed that I never would fail as Alexander and Cæsar and Napoleon had done, — and I never have. I remember that once my father came to school on the last day, in the afternoon, to hear us speak; and when I got home at night he told me that the boy who spoke the piece about How the Mighty had Fallen had all the elements of an orator, and he predicted that some day he would make his mark in the world. I felt that I

would have given everything I possessed if only my father had said that about me. I know that in my tactful way I led up again and again to the piece that I had spoken, but about this my father said not a single word.

How I envied that red-headed lad, and how I wondered if there really was any chance that I might come out as well as he! For some years my remembrance of this youth passed away, until the last time I went back home. Then, as I drove past his house with never a thought of my old-time friend, I looked over into the weed-covered yard,— perhaps it was weedy before, but I did not so remember it,— and there I saw a man with a hoe in his hand cleaning out a drain that ran from the cellar to the ditch in front of the house. I looked closely at him, and I never in the world should have known him; but he came down to the fence, and leaned on his hoe, and hailed me as I passed. No doubt he had heard that I had come to town. Then I remembered the piece about How the Mighty had Fallen, and the little red-headed boy at school; but this boy's hair was white, he was bent, and his clothes were about the color of his hair and hands and face in those far-off years when he spoke the piece. I was shocked, but I tried not to let him know it. I asked him how he was, and how he was getting along; and he told me he was very well, and was doing first-rate. And then I thought of my poor father, who said that he had all the elements of an orator and would

make his mark some day. Well, perhaps he had made his mark, even though he was cleaning out a cellar-drain,— and, after all, this is better work than making speeches, however fine.

To go back to the last day of school. I remember one piece that we used to speak, about Marco Bozzaris, and how he got into a fight with some Turks; and first he was killed, and then he killed the Turks, as it seemed to me. I had no idea who the Turks were, or why Marco Bozzaris was fighting them, or what it was all about; but I seemed to think there were certain parts of the piece that should be spoken in a loud voice, and certain others that should be said very softly. The book I learned it from had characters or figures that told us when we should speak softly and when we should speak loudly, and we always followed the instructions of the book. If it had told us to speak loudly when it said softly, and softly instead of loudly, we would have done it that way without a thought that it could make any difference with the piece. I have no doubt that if I should read " Marco Bozzaris " to-day I should read it loudly and softly in just the same places that I did at school, without any more regard for what it meant than I had then.

But there was one piece that I always thought especially fine. It was about Casabianca. The name now sounds to me like a Spanish name, but I am sure I had no thought then of what it was. It might have been a Swedish or an Irish name, for

all I knew. I remember that this Casabianca was a lad about my own age, and somehow he was on a ship in a battle, and his father was with him. His father was called away on some important matter, and told Casabianca to stand right there on a certain spot and wait until he got back. Something must have detained him,— as I recall it, he was killed, or something of that kind,— at any rate, he did not get back, and it grew dark, and Casabianca began to cry. Pretty soon, to make matters worse, a fire broke out on board the ship, and the smoke began to smother him and the flames to roll around him. The other people on the ship ran to the shore, and they called to him to run too, and the gang-plank had not been taken in or burned, and he had lots of time to get away; but no, his father had gone off, and had told Casabianca to wait until he returned, and he proposed to wait. So he called wildly for his father a great many times; but his father did not come. Still the boy stood fast, and the flames crept slowly up until he was burned to cinders at his post.

This was a very exciting story, and we used to speak it with voices loud and soft, and with gestures that looked like rolling fire and smoke. I did not really know then, but I know now, that this piece was written by somebody who fancied himself or herself a poet, and that it was written to teach a moral lesson. I remember that the last line read: "But the noblest thing that perished there was that

young and faithful heart." From this I am sure that the lesson meant to be taught was the great virtue of obeying your parents.

I cannot recall that I ever heard any of our teachers say a word about this poem, so I infer that they must have approved its sentiments. Of course I am old enough now to know that a boy who would stick to a burning ship like that might just as well get burned up and be done with it at once. But I cannot exactly make up my mind what punishment should be given to the poet or the book-publisher or the teacher who allowed this sort of heroics to be given to a child.

In our pieces and in our lessons a great deal was said about the duties that children owe their parents, a great deal about how much our parents had done for us, and how kind and obedient we should be to them. But I cannot recall that there was a single line about the duties that parents owe to children, and how much they should do for the child who had nothing to say about his own entrance into the world. It is true that these books were written for children, but just as true that the children were to become parents, and that most of them would get little instruction beyond the district school. Which fact may to some extent account for the great number of bad and foolish parents in the world.

Many of these pieces told how much we owed the country, and of our duty to live for it and fight

for it, and if need be to die for it. I cannot recall that a single one ever told of any duty the country owed to us, or anything that should be given in return for our service and our lives. All of which shows what a great handicap we children suffered by being obliged to go to school.

After the last piece had been spoken, the teacher put on her most serious face (she always had a variety of faces to put on) and told us how she loved us all,— although she had never said a word of this sort before,— how good and faithful and studious we had been; she told us how kind our parents were to let us go to school, how sad she felt at the final parting, and how impossible it was that the little group could ever be gathered together again this side of heaven, which she trusted all of us would some day reach, so that she might meet us once again. At this we began to regret that we had not treated her better and been more obedient to her rules. Then we felt sad, and drew our coat-sleeves across our eyes, and wished that she would stop talking and let us go out. Finally she spoke the last words and dismissed the school, and our days of captivity were done. Each child snatched his carefully packed books and slate, and with shouts and laughter rushed through the school-house door into the free open world outside.

CHAPTER VIII

FARMINGTON

OUR house stood a short distance beyond the town, and on the other side of the creek that ran my father's mill. This little stream came down out of the hills from somewhere a long way off, and emptied into the river that wound through the long valley beside the road, flowing from no man knew where. I must have been nine or ten years old before I was allowed to go to the mouth of the stream and watch it join the river and run off between the high hills beyond the town into the great unknown world. Many years before, I had heard that there was such a place, but I was not allowed to go; it was so far away, and the dangers were supposed to be so very great,— though why, I cannot say, any more than I can give a reason for other things that we boys believed, or, for that matter, that we grown-up folk believe.

But I used to go quite early across the creek to the little town; at first holding my father or mother tightly by the hand, or, rather, having my hand held close by theirs. There were many wonders on the way: first, the old wooden bridge that used often to be carried off in the spring, when heavy rains and melting snow and ice came down the stream.

But this bridge was nothing compared with the long covered one below the town, that I found some years later, when I had grown large enough to fish and was ashamed to hold my father and my mother by the hand.

Just across the stream was the blacksmith-shop into which I used to look with wondering eyes. I can see now the white-hot iron as the old bare-armed smith pulled it from the coals and threw the sparks in all directions, frightening me almost beyond my wits; still, I would always go back to the open door to be scared again. Especially in the early dusk, this old blacksmith-shop, with its great bellows and anvil and hammers, and its flying sparks and roaring fire lighting up the room and throwing dark shadows in the corners and around the edges, was a constant source of wonder and delight; and I used to beg my good father to throw away my stupid books and apprentice me to learn the blacksmith trade. But he steadfastly refused my prayers and tears, and told me that I would live to thank him for denying this first ambition of my life. Well, I did not learn the trade, and in a halting way I have followed the path into which the kind old miller guided my young reluctant feet. Still, I am not yet sure that he was right; for all my life, when I am honest with myself, I cannot help the thought that I have been a good deal of a blacksmith, after all.

Just beyond was the wagon-shop, where they

made such nice long shavings, and where we used to go and play " I spy," or " High spy," as we boys called the game. The benches, wagons, and piles of lumber, and the garret overhead, furnished the best possible places for us to hide.

Then came the shoe-shop, where my father took us to get our winter boots, which he paid for by trading flour saved up from his tolls. This shop was a large affair, with three or four men and boys working steadily in the busy season of the year. Two or three checker-boards, too, were constantly in use, especially in the long winter evenings, and every man in the room would tell the player where he ought to move, or rather where he should have moved in order to win the game.

The old shoe-shop was a great place to discuss the questions of the day; it was even more popular than the store. Politics and religion were the favorite topics then, as they are to-day,— as they have ever been since the world began, and will ever be while the world shall last; for one of them has to do with the brief transitory life of man upon the earth, and the other with his everlasting hopes and doubts, desires and fears for another life when this is done. Besides politics and religion, men and women were discussed,— all the men and women for miles around who were not there; these critics debated about the skill of the blacksmith and the carriage-maker, the thrift of the merchant and the farmer, and the learning of the preachers and the

doctors. This last topic was a never-ending subject for debate, as there were two of each. I do not remember what they said about the preachers, but I know that when any doctor was discussed his disciples stoutly claimed that he was the best in the whole country round, while his enemies agreed that they would not let him "doctor a sick cat." As I recall those little groups, their opinions on men and women almost always seemed unfavorable and hard, like most of the personal discussions that I have ever heard. After much reflection I have reached the conclusion that all people are envious to a greater or a less degree, and of course each one's goodness and importance increase in proportion as those of others are made to grow less.

The last time I went back along the road, I found that the wagon-shop and the shoe-shop had long since closed their doors. Cincinnati buggies and Studebaker wagons had driven away the last board of the old lumber-piles around which we children used to play; and New England shoe-factories had utterly destroyed the old forum where were discussed the mysteries of life and death. Even the customs of the simple country folks had changed, for I observed that the boys wore shoes instead of boots; but in those days all the girls wore shoes, and now they were wearing boots. The blacksmith-shop still stood beside the road, but the old smith had gone away, and his son was now hammering stoutly at the same piece of white-hot iron that his

father pulled out of the red coals so long ago; but the little boy who once looked in with wondering eyes at the open door,— it seemed as if he too were dead and buried forever behind a great mass of shifting clouds heaped so thick and high as to make nothing but a dream of those far-off childhood years.

I had almost forgotten to tell the name of my boyhood town. It was Farmington; and I feel that I ought to write it down in this book, so that the world may know exactly where it is, for I am sure it was never in a book before, excepting a county atlas that once printed pictures and biographies of all the leading citizens of the place. I remember that the agent came to see my father, and told him what a beautiful picture the mill would make, and how anxious he was to have his portrait and history for the book. I really believe my father would have given his consent but for the reason that the season had been dry and he did not dare to sign a note. Poor man! I almost wish he had consented, for even if the book had never been seen by any but the simple country folk who paid for their glory, as we all must do in some way, still my father could have read his own biography, and looked at the picture of himself and his famous mill. And really this is about the only reason that any of us write books, if the truth were known.

Beyond the shop the road ran into a great common which we called a square. This really was a

wonderful affair,— about the size of Rhode Island, as it seemed to us. . Here we boys often gathered on Saturday afternoons, and, when I grew older, on the few nights that my father was away from home, or on some special occasion when I prevailed on him to let me go there and play.

On one side of the square was the country store, — a mammoth establishment, kept by a very rich man, who had everything that was ever heard of on his shelves. I used to marvel how he could possibly think to buy all the things that he had to sell. Across the road from the store was the country tavern, and alongside it was a long low barn with a big shed at the end. A fierce dog was kept chained inside the barn. We hardly dared to look into the tavern door, for we had all heard that it was a very wicked place. It was said that down in the cellar, in some secret corner, was a barrel of whiskey; and the tavern-keeper had once been sent for three months to the county jail, when some good people had gone in, one winter night, and told him that they were very cold, and asked him to sell them some whiskey to keep them warm. At any rate, our people would never let us go near the door. I used to wonder what kind of things they had to eat in the tavern. It was the only place I ever heard of where they charged anything for dinner or supper, and I thought the meals must be wonderful indeed, and I always hoped that some day I might have a chance to go there and eat.

On another side of the common was Squire Allen's place. This was a great white house, altogether the grandest in the town,— or in the world, for that matter, so we children believed. It was set back from the road, in the midst of a grove of trees, and there was a big gate where carriages could drive into the front yard along the curving roadway and up to the big front door. Beneath the overhanging porch were four or five square white pillars, and the door had a brass knocker, and there were big square stone steps that came down to the road. Back of the house were a barn and a carriage-house, the latter the only building of the kind in Farmington.

Squire Allen was a tall man with white hair and a clean-shaven face. He carried a gold-headed cane, and when you met him on the street he never looked to the right or left. Everyone knew he was the greatest man in the place,— in fact, the greatest man in all the world. He had a large carriage, with two seats and big wheels and a top, and two horses; and he was nearly always riding in the carriage. I do not remember much about his family; I know that he had a little boy, but I was not acquainted with him, although I knew all the rest of the little boys in town. I would often see the Squire and his whole family out driving in their carriage. I remember standing on the little bridge and looking down at the fishes in the brook; and I hear the rumble of wheels coming down the hill. I

glance up, and there comes Squire Allen; his little boy is sitting on the front seat with him, and on the back seat are some ladies that I do not know. They drive down the hill, the old Squire looking neither to the right nor left. I am afraid of being run over, and I go as near the edge of the bridge as I dare, to escape the great rolling wheels. The little boy peers out at me as the carriage passes by, as if he wondered who could dare stand in the road when his father drove that way; but neither the Squire nor the ladies ever knew that I was there.

A few months ago, this same little boy called on me at my office in the city. He, like myself, had wandered far and wide since he passed me on the bridge. He came to ask me to help him get a job. Somehow, as I saw him then, and recalled the arrogance and pride that old Squire Allen and his family always had, I am afraid I almost felt glad that he had been obliged to come. I am sure I felt that at last fortune was making things right and even. I cannot find in my philosophy any good reason why the scheme is any more just if he was rich and I was poor when we were young, and I am rich and he is poor when we are growing old,— but still I believe I felt this way.

Old Squire Allen has been dead for a quarter of a century and more. Last summer, when I visited the old Pennsylvania town, I went to the little burying-ground, and inside the yard I found

an iron picket fence, and in this enclosure a monument taller than any other in the yard, and on this stone I read Squire Allen's name. Poor old man! It is many years since the worms ate up the last morsel of the old man that even a worm could find fit to eat, but still even after death and decay he lies there solitary and exclusive, the most commanding and imposing of all the names that seek immortality in the carved letters of the granite stones. Well, I am not sure but sometime I shall go back to Farmington and put up a monument higher than Allen's, and have "Smith" carved on the base; and then I suppose it will be easier to go down under it to rest.

But it is only when I am especially envious that I have such thoughts as these. I was yet a little boy in Farmington when they placed the old Squire inside the burying-ground. What a day was that! The store was closed; the tavern door was shut; the old water-wheel stood still; all Farmington turned out in sad procession to follow the great man to his grave. The hawks and crows flying high above the town must have looked down and thought we mourned a king. At least no such royal funeral was ever seen in all those parts before or since. The burial of old Squire Allen was as like to that of Julius Cæsar as Farmington was like to Rome. So, after all, it would be very mean for me to buy a monument higher than his, just because I

can; so I will leave him the undisputed monarch of the place, and will get for myself one of the small black oval-cornered slabs that we boys passed by with such contempt when we rambled through the yard to pick out the finest stones.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH

FARMINGTON was a very godly place; so, at least, her people thought. Among the many well-known attractions of the town, its religious privileges stood easily at the head. A little way up the hill, on a level piece of ground, the early settlers long ago had built a big white church. The congregation professed the United Presbyterian faith; and this was the state religion, not only of Farmington but of all the country around. The church itself was a wonder to behold. It seemed to us children to have been built to accommodate all the people in the world and then have room to spare. No other building we had ever seen could be compared in size with this great white church. And when we read of vast cathedrals and other wonderful buildings, we always thought of the United Presbyterian church, and had no idea that they were half so grand.

The main part of the building was long and wide, and the ceiling very high; but more marvellous still was the square belfry in the front. None of us boys ever knew how high it was; we always insisted that it was really higher than it seemed, and we were in the habit of comparing it with all the tall

objects we had ever seen or of which we had heard or read. It was surely higher than our flag-pole or our tallest tree, higher than Niagara Falls or Bunker Hill Monument; and we scarcely believed that anyone had ever climbed to its dizzy top, although there was a little platform with a wooden railing round it almost at its highest point. We had heard that inside the belfry was an endless series of stairs, and that the sexton sometimes went to the top, when a new rope was to be fastened to the bell; but none of us had so much as looked up through the closed trap-door which kept even the most venturesome from the tower.

The church stood out in plain view from every portion of the town; and for a long distance up and down the valley road, and over beyond the creek on the farther hill it loomed majestic and white,—a constant reminder to the people who lived round about that, however important the other affairs of life, their church and their religion were more vital still.

I never heard when the church was built. As well might we have asked when the town was settled, or when the country road came winding down, or even when the river began flowing between the high green hills. If any one object more than another was Farmington, surely it was the great white church.

I am certain that the people of the town, and, in fact, of all the country round, had no thought

that religion was anything more or less, than communion with the church.

High up in the belfry swung a monstrous bell. None of us had seen it, but we knew it was there, for every Sunday its deep religious tones floated over the valley and up the hills, breaking the stillness of the Sabbath day. Sometimes, when we were a little early at church, at the ringing of the bell we would look up to the tower and fancy that through the open slats of the belfry we could see some great object swinging back and forth; and then, too, all of us had seen the end of a rope in a little room back of the organ on the second floor, and we had been told that the other end was fastened to the great bell away up in the high tower, and we used to wonder and speculate as to how strong the sexton must be to pull the rope that swung the mighty bell.

Every Sabbath morning the procession of farmers' wagons drove by our home on their way to church, and we learned to know the color of the horses, the size of the wagons and carriages, and the number of members in each family, in this weekly throng; we even knew what time to expect the several devotees, and who came first and who came last, and we assumed that those who passed earliest were the most religious and devout. These Sabbath pilgrims were dressed in their best clothes, and looked serious and sad, as became communicants of the church. The pace at which they drove,

their manner of dress, cast of countenance, and silent and stolid demeanor were in marked contrast to their appearance on any other days.

The Sabbath, the church, and religion were serious and solemn matters to the band of pilgrims who every Sunday drove up the hill. All our neighbors and acquaintances were members of the United Presbyterian church, and to them their religion seemed a gloomy thing. Their Sabbath began at sun-down on Saturday and lasted until Monday morning, and the gloom seemed to grow and deepen on their faces as the light faded into twilight and the darkness of the evening came.

My parents were not members of the church; in fact, they had little belief in some of its chief articles of faith. In his youth my father was ambitious to be a minister, for all his life he was bent on doing good and helping his fellowman; but he passed so rapidly through all the phases of religious faith, from Methodism through Congregationalism and Universalism to Unitarianism and beyond, that he never had time to stop long enough at any one resting spot to get ordained to preach.

My father seldom went to church on Sunday. He was almost the only man in town who stayed away, excepting a few who were considered worthless and who managed to steal off with dog and gun to the woods and hills. But Sunday was a precious day to my father. Even if the little creek had been swollen by recent rains, and the water ran wastefully

over the big dam and off on its long journey through the hills, still my father never ran his mill on Sunday. I fancy that if he had wished to do so the people would not have let him save the wasted power. But all through the week my father must have looked forward to Sunday, for on that day he was not obliged to work, and was free to revel in his books. As soon as breakfast was over he went to his little room, and was soon lost to the living world. I have always been thankful that the religion and customs of the community rescued this one day from the tiresome monotony of his life. All day Sunday, and far into the night, he lived with those rare souls who had left the records of their lives and spirits for the endless procession of men and women who come and go upon the earth.

Both my father and my mother thought it best that we children go to church. So, however much we protested (as natural children always do), we were obliged to go up the hill with the moving throng to the great white church.

In another part of the town, in an out-of-the-way place, was the unpretentious little Methodist church. It stood at the edge of the woods, almost lost in their shadow, and seemed to shrink from sight, as if it had no right to stand in the presence of the mighty building on the hill. We never went to this church, except to revivals, and we never understood how it was kept up, as its members were very poor. The shoemaker and a few other rather unimportant

people seemed to be its only devotees. The Methodist preacher did not live in Farmington when I first knew the town, but used to drive in from an adjoining village in the afternoon, and preach the same sermon he had delivered in his home town in the morning, and then go on to the next village and preach it once more in the evening. Some years later, after a wonderful revival in which almost all outsiders except our family were converted to Methodism, this church became so strong that it was able to buy a piece of ground in the village and put up a new building with a high steeple, though nothing like as grand as the old white church on the hill. After this the Methodist preacher came to Farmington to live.

But although we were not United Presbyterians, we children went regularly to this church because we had to go. The old bell that rang out so long on Sunday mornings always had a doleful sound to us, and altogether Sunday was a sore cross to our young lives.

There were many substantial reasons why we did not like the Sabbath day. Games of all kinds were prohibited; and although we managed sometimes to steal away to play, still we had no sooner begun a game than someone came along and made us stop. It made no difference who chanced to come,— anyone had the right to stop our playing on the Sabbath day. Then, too, on Sunday we must dress up. This was no small affair, for if we put on our best

clothes and our stockings and boots when we first got up we were obliged to wear them nearly the whole day; whereas if we had on our comfortable everyday clothes in the morning, we must change them in an hour or so, to get ready for church. Even if we put on our best clothes and went barefoot until the first bell rang, then we were obliged to wash our feet,— for our mother would not let us put on our stockings except in the early morning unless we first washed our feet. Then, after church was out and we had eaten dinner, we either had to wear our best clothes the rest of the day, or change them all; and then it was only a little while until bedtime, and we could not play even if we did change our clothes. If we just pulled off our boots and went barefoot the rest of the day, then we must wash our feet at night. Childhood was not all joy: it had it special sorrows, which grew less as years crept on, and one of the chief of these burdens, was that we so often had to wash our feet.

But more burdensome if possible than this was the general "cleaning" on Sunday mornings. On week-days we almost always washed our faces and our hands each day, but as a rule this duty was left largely to ourselves, with a scolding now and then as a safeguard to its performance. Often, of course, we passed such a poor inspection at meal-times that we were sent from the table to wash again. Still, for the most part we knew how much was absolutely required, and we managed to keep

just inside the line. But on Sundays all was changed. Then our words and good intentions went for naught. We were not even allowed to wash ourselves. Our mother always took us in hand, and the water must be warm, and she must use soap and a rag, and we had to keep our eyes shut tight while she was rubbing the soapy rag all over our faces,— and she never hurried in the least. We might have stood the washing of hands and faces, but it did not end here. Every Sunday morning our mother washed our necks and ears; and no boy could ever see the use of this. Nothing roused our righteous indignation quite so much as washing our necks. The occasion, too, was really less on Sunday than on any other day, because then we always wore some sort of stiff collar around our necks. Neither was it enough to wash our hands; our sleeves must be pushed up nearly to our elbows, and our arms scrubbed as carefully as if they too were going to show. Even if we had been in swimming on Saturday night, and had taken soap and towels to the creek, and been laughed at by the other boys for our pains, still we must be washed just the same on Sunday morning before we went to church. In the matter of Sunday washing our mother seemed never to have the slightest confidence in anything we said or did. There were no bathtubs in Farmington,— at least none that I ever heard of; so we boys had something to be thankful for, although we did not know it then. To be sure, we were often put

into a common washtub on Saturday night or Sunday morning, but sometimes swimming was taken in lieu of this.

When we were thoroughly cleaned, and dressed in our newest and most uncomfortable clothes, with stiff heavy boots upon our captive feet, our mother took us to the church. We were led conspicuously up the aisle, between the rows of high pews, set down on a hard wooden seat, the door of the pew fastened with a little hook to keep us safely in, and then the real misery began. The smallest of us could not see over the high pew in front, but we scarcely dared to play, except perhaps to get a piece of string out of our pockets, or to exchange marbles or jack-knives or memory-buttons, or something of the sort, and then we generally managed to get into some trouble and run the risk of bringing our mother into disgrace. In the pew in front of us there usually sat the little girl with the golden curls, — or was it the one with the black hair? I am not sure which it was, but it was one of these, and I managed sometimes to whisper to her over the pew, until my mother or hers stopped the game. I somehow got along better with her on Sunday than at any other time,— perhaps because neither of us had anything better to do than to watch each other.

I could not understand then, nor do I to-day, why we were made to go to church; surely our good parents did not know how we suffered, or they would not have been so cruel and unkind. I re-

member that the services began with singing by the choir in the gallery, and I sometimes used to turn around and look up to see the singers and the organ; and I remember especially a boy who used to sway back and forth, sideways, to pump the organ. I had an idea that he must be a remarkable lad, and endowed with some religious gifts, second only to the preacher. After the first song came the first prayer, which was not very short, but still nothing at all to the one yet in store. Then came more singing, and then the long prayer. My! what agony it was! I remember particularly the old preacher as he stood during those everlasting prayers. I can see him now,— tall and spare and straight, his white face circled with a fringe of white whiskers. I always thought him very old, and supposed that he came there with the church, and was altogether different from other men. As he prayed, he clasped his hands on the great Bible that lay upon the altar, and kept his eyes closed and his face turned steadily toward the ceiling. He spoke slowly and in a moderate tone of voice, and in the most solemn way. I never could understand how he kept his eyes closed and his sad face turned upward for so long a time, excepting that he had a special superhuman power.

I could not have sat through that prayer, but for the fact that I learned to find landmarks as he went along. At a certain point I knew it was well under way; at another point it was about half done; and

when he began asking for guidance and protection for the President of the United States, it was three-quarters over, and I felt like a shipwrecked mariner sighting land. But even the longest prayers have an end, and when this was through we were glad to stand up while they sang once more. Then came the sermon, which was longer yet; but we did not feel that we must sit quite so still as during the long prayer. First and last I must have heard an endless number of the good old parson's sermons read in his solemn voice; but I cannot now remember a single word of any one I heard. After the sermon came singing and a short prayer,— any prayer was short after what we had passed through,— then more singing, and the final benediction, which to us children was always a benediction of the most welcome kind.

CHAPTER X

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL

WHEN the church services were ended, we children stayed for Sunday-school. There was never anything especially alluring in Sunday-school; still it was far better than the church. At least ten or twelve of us boys could sit together in a high pew, and no one could keep us from whispering and laughing and telling jokes. Even the teachers seemed to realize what we had been through, and were disposed to allow us a fair amount of liberty in Sunday-school.

The superintendent was a young man named Henry Pitkin. He was a few years older than the boys. I cannot now remember what he did on week-days; we never thought of him as working, or wearing old clothes, or doing anything except being superintendent of the Sunday-school. I presume he is dead, poor fellow, for I know he was always sickly,— at least, that is what we boys thought. I believe he was threatened with consumption, and I heard people speak of him with pity and say what a nice young man he was. I never knew him to take part in our games, or to go swimming or fishing, or anything of that sort. I cannot remember

that he was cross or unkind, or what we boys called mean; but still I know we never talked so loud, and were always a little more particular, and sometimes stopped our games, when he came along the road. I am sure we felt sorry for him, and thought he never had any fun. He was always dressed up, even when it was not Sunday; and he never went barefooted, or shouted, or made any kind of jokes. I know that I often saw him go up to the church, to the Thursday evening prayer-meetings, in the summer-time. He would walk past us while we were playing ball on the square in the long twilight. None of us could understand why he went to prayer-meeting on Thursday night. None of us really knew what prayer-meeting was. We never had to go to church any day but Sunday, and although our curiosity was strong it never led us to go to the Thursday evening prayer-meeting. Everybody who went seemed awfully old, except Henry, and we never understood how he could go. Sometimes we met him going to the preacher's for an evening visit, and this seemed still stranger. None of us boys ever went for an evening visit anywhere; and if we had gone we never would have thought of going to the preacher's,— he was so old and solemn, and we were sure that if we ever went there he would talk to us about dying and religion.

Our fathers and mothers and the grown-up people were always telling us what a good boy Henry was, and asking us why we did n't do things the way

he did. Of course, we could n't do as he did, no matter how hard we tried.

In the Sunday-school Henry always told us what to sing; he would talk to us softly and quietly, and he never scolded the least bit. He always asked us to be good, and told us how much happier we would be if we learned lots of verses, and never called bad names, or fought, and always tried to do right. Henry told us all about the lesson papers, and seemed to know everything there was in the Bible, and all about Damascus and Jericho and those foreign cities that are in the Bible. Then he used to give out the Sunday-school books. We usually took one of these home with us, but we never cared much about them. The stories were all rather silly, and did n't amount to much.

We boys used to argue about what a superintendent was, and just how high an office Henry had. We all knew that it was not so high as the preacher's, but we thought it was next to his, and some said it was below a deacon. Some of us thought that Henry was elected by the Sunday-school teachers, and some thought his office was higher than theirs and that he could turn them off whenever he had a mind to.

When the Sunday-school began, Henry would make us a little speech, telling us something about the lesson-papers, and sometimes telling us a story that he said came out of the Bible; and then he would have one of the boys pass around the singing-

books, and tell us what piece to sing. The boys and girls rather liked the singing. With the boys the singing partook largely of the nature of physical exercise.

We used to stand up and sing together in a chorus, or as nearly in harmony as the superintendent and the organ could possibly keep us. True, the songs were not of a humorous or even cheerful nature; but then we really had no idea of what they meant, if indeed the teachers or the authors had, and we sang them with the same zest and vigor that we would have given to any other words. I especially remember one song that we sang pretty well, and very loud and earnestly; not with the least bit of sadness or even solemnity, but with great energy and zeal. It began with the lines, "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand." Now, of course, there was not a boy or girl in the school who wanted to be an angel; neither did the teachers or the superintendent, or even the parson. In fact, this was the last thing that any of us wanted; but we fairly shouted our desire to be an angel in a strong chorus of anything but angelic voices. I presume children sing that same song to-day in Sunday-school, and sing it without any more thought of its meaning than the little freckle-faced boys and girls who used to gather each Sunday in the old white church and fidget and fuss over their new stiff clothes and their hard and pinching boots.

Besides the singing, the chief work of the Sun-

day-school teachers was to have us learn verses from the Testament. Of course, none of us had any idea what these verses meant, or why we were to learn them, or what we were to do with them after they were learned. In a general way, we all knew that the Testament was a sacred volume, and not to be read or studied or looked at like any other book; and certainly the lives and characters of which it told were in no way human, but seemed hazy, nebulous, and far away.

I cannot recall all the means that were taken to make us learn those verses. Of course there was no whipping in the Sunday-school as there was in the district school, and the inducements given us were of a somewhat higher kind. I especially remember that for every certain number of dozen verses we learned we were given a red card; this card had a picture of a dove on the top and some verses below it, and a red border around the edges; then I know that for a certain number of red cards we were given a blue card similar to the red, except that the dove had been changed to a little spring lamb. I cannot recall what we got for the blue card; probably nothing at all. It was no doubt the ultimate. There must be somewhere an ultimate with children as with men.

I remember that at Christmas time we had a tree, and the two churches used sometimes to get up a rivalry as to the value of the presents, and there were little desertions back and forth on this account.

I know we all thought that the number and value of the presents would be in some way related to the number of verses we had learned; and I am sure that the number of scholars and the regularity of attendance always increased toward Christmas time. I must have learned a great many million verses first and last, but none of them seem to have made any impression on my mind, and I can now recall only a few about John the Baptist, who came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and whose food was locusts and wild honey, and who called on all the people in the wilderness to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Now, I am certain that John the Baptist did not seem a real man to me, and that I had no idea of what the wilderness of Judæa was like or what sort of people lived there. All this was only so many verses to be learned, for which I would get so many cards. I believe I thought that John the Baptist had some sort of relation to the Baptist church, and I wondered how he could live on locusts and wild honey; for I had seen locusts, and they were only a sort of flying bug, and no more fit to eat than a grasshopper or a horse-fly. I am sure that I thought this a very slim diet for a man,— even for a preacher, who we thought cared little about what he ate. I have grown older now, and wiser, and have heard many John the Baptists preaching in the wilderness and calling unwilling sinners to repentance; and now I do not so much

wonder about the locusts, but I can scarcely see how he was so lucky as to get the wild honey.

But the one thing that most impresses me as I look back on the day-school and the Sunday-school where we spent so many of our childhood hours is the unreality of it all. Surely none of the lessons seemed in any way related to our lives. None of them touched our minds, or gave us a thought or feeling about the problems we were soon to face.

Often on Sunday evening my father gathered us about the family table in the dining-room and read a sermon from Channing or Theodore Parker or James Martineau. I cannot recall to-day a single word or thought or impression that lingered from the sermons Channing preached, but I am sure that the force and power and courage of Parker left their mark on my life; and that even in my youth the kindly, gentle, loving words and thoughts of James Martineau were not entirely thrown away on me.

The old preacher, as he stood before us on Sunday morning, never seemed quite like a man,— we felt that he was a holy being, and we looked on him with fear and reverence and awe. I remember meeting him in the field one day, and I tried to avoid him and get away; but he came to me and talked in the kindest and most entertaining way. He said nothing whatever about religion, and his voice and the expression of his face were not at all as they seemed when I sat in front of him in the hard pew during the terrible "long prayer."

But my father never feared him in the least, and often these two old men met for an evening to read their musty books, although I could not understand the reason why. After I had gone to bed at night I heard them working away at their Greek, with more pains than any of the scholars at the school. I wondered why they did these tasks, when they had no parents to keep them at their work. I was too young to know that as these old men dug out the hard Greek roots, they felt the long stems reaching back through the toilsome years and bringing to their waning lives a feeling of hope and vigor from their departed youth.

CHAPTER XI

THE BURYING-GROUND

DIRECTLY in the shelter of the church was the burying-ground. It had first been laid out at the corner of the road, on one side of the great building; but slowly and surely it crept around behind the sheds where the horses were hitched during the Sunday services, and then still farther on to the other side. The first part of the yard was almost filled with little mounds and leaning stones, and most of its silent tenants were forgotten by all save a few old people who lingered far beyond the natural term of life. The new yard was in every way more pretentious than the old; the head-stones were higher, the grass was greener, the mounds were more regular, and the trees and shrubs were better kept. The bones of many of the dead aristocracy had been dug up out of the old yard by their proud relatives, and carefully laid in the new, where they might rest in the same exclusive surroundings in which they lived while still upon the earth.

As a child, these graveyards had no definite meaning to me, but I never went by them after nightfall if I could possibly go any other way, especially if I chanced to be alone. If I could not avoid going

this way, I always kept well to the other side of the road, and walked or ran as fast as I could, with scarcely a glance toward the silent yard and the white stones that gleamed so grimly in the dusk. Sometimes a number of us boys would go through the yard in broad daylight, but even then we preferred almost any other spot.

I cannot recall when a sense of the real meaning of a churchyard came full upon me. I have no doubt that I unconsciously felt the gloom of the place before I fully understood what it really meant.

In the summer-time we children were usually taken through the graveyard on our way home from church; but after the long services even this seemed a pleasant spot. On Sunday we were not afraid, for all the worshippers went home this way.

The yards were filled with evergreen trees carefully trimmed and clipped, with here and there a weeping-willow drooping its doleful branches to the ground. Why these trees were chosen for the churchyard, I cannot tell; but I have never since seen an evergreen or a weeping-willow that did not take me back to that little spot. The footpaths wound in and out, and ran off in all directions to reach each separate plat of ground that the thrifty neighbors had set apart as the final resting-place which would be theirs until the resurrection came. Most of them firmly believed in this great day,—or at least they told themselves they did. Around the yard was a neat white fence, always kept in

good repair; and the gates were carefully locked except on the Sabbath day. Many times I saw the old sexton wait until the last mourner had slowly left the yard, and then carefully lock the gate and go away. It seemed to me as if he were locking the gate to keep his silent tenants in, like a jailer who turns the bolts upon the prisoners in their cells.

As a little child, I used to look at the sexton half in awe, and I almost feared to come into his uncanny presence. I never could think that he was quite like other men, or else he could not shovel the dirt so carelessly into the open grave. I had never seen anyone but the old sexton fill the grave and smooth the little mound that was always made from the dirt that was left over after the coffin was put down; and I used to wonder, in my childish way, how the sexton would get buried when he was dead.

The church and the graveyard were closely associated in my mind. It seemed to me, as a little child, that the church had full jurisdiction of the yard, and that the care and protection of the graves and their mouldering tenants were the chief reasons why the church was there. The great bell tolled slowly and mournfully at each death, and we counted the solemn strokes to know the age of the hapless one whose turn had come. Sometimes we could even guess who had died, from the number of times it struck; but even these strokes did not impress me much. Almost always the number was very great. I could not see any connection between these old

people and myself; and, besides, I felt that if the time could ever come when I had grown so old, I would have lived far beyond an age when there was any joy in life. On the day of the funeral, the bell commenced to toll when the hearse came into view from the church and began its slow journey up the hill, and it did not cease until the last carriage was inside the yard. The importance of the dead could always be told by the length of time the old bell rang while the procession crawled up the hill. We used to compare these processions, and dispute as to who had the longest funeral; but after old Squire Allen's turn had come, there was no longer any doubt. As I grew older, and began to give rein to my ambitions and dreams, I hoped and rather believed that in the far-off years I might have a longer procession than the one that had followed him to the little yard, but of late years I have rather lost interest in this old ambition.

At almost every mound stood a white marble slab, and sometimes there was a grand and pretentious monument in the centre of the lot. When I was very young, I thought that those who had the finest monuments were the ones most loved and mourned. It was long before I realized that even the barred gates of a graveyard could not keep vanity outside. I often heard the neighbors talk about these stones. Sometimes they said it was strange that Farmer Smith could not show enough respect for his wife to put up a finer gravestone.

Again, they said that it would have been better if Farmer Brown had been kinder to his wife while she lived, than to have put up such a grand monument after she was dead.

We boys sometimes went through the yard to pick out the slabs we liked the best; these were always the tallest and the largest ones. We carefully read the inscriptions on these stones, and never for a moment doubted a word they said, any more than we doubted Holy Writ. All the inscriptions told of the virtues of the dead, and generally were helped out by a Scriptural text. In the case of children the stone was usually ornamented with a lamb or a dove, which we thought wonderful and fine. Sometimes an angel in the form of a woman was coming down from the clouds to take a happy child away to heaven. I cannot recall that I saw any angels in the forms of men, though why all the angels were women I did not know then, nor, for that matter, do I now.

I think the first time my faith was shaken in anything I saw on a gravestone was one day when I chanced upon a brand-new slab erected to the memory of the town drunkard by his "loving wife and children." The inscription said that the deceased was a kind and loving husband and a most indulgent father. Everyone in Farmington knew that the wife had often called in the constable to protect her from the husband; but still here was the stone. Yet, after all, the inscription may not have been untrue;

indeed, it may have been more truthful than those that rested above many a man and woman who had lived and died without reproach.

Even in the churchyard we boys knew which were the favored spots. We understood that the broad thoroughfares where carriages could drive were taken by the richest people of the town, and that the mounds away off at one side and reached only by narrow foot-paths were for the poorer and humbler folk. I always hoped I might be buried where the teams could pass; it seemed as if I should be lonely away on the outskirts where no one ever came along.

Even when quite young, I could not help noticing how many graves were at first planted with flowers and decked and kept with the greatest care, and how soon the rosebushes were broken and the weeds and grass grew rank and high upon the mound. Everyone thought this a shame; and I thought so too. But that is not so clear to me to-day as it was then. I have rather come to think it fortunate that Nature, through time and change, heals the sore wounds and dulls the cruel memories of the past.

When I had grown old enough to go to the Academy on the hill, we boys had a playground just at the edge of the graveyard. Sometimes the strongest hitter would knock the ball clear over to the newest mounds that were slowly encroaching on our domain. When it was my turn to chase the ball, I always got it as quickly as I could, and ran away,

for even this momentary intrusion of the dead into our games left an uneasy feeling in my mind.

The last time I was in Farmington I once more went inside the old graveyard; somehow it had a nearer and more personal meaning to me than it ever had before. In those far-off days the churchyard was only a casual thought that flitted now and then like a shadow through my mind,— never with much personal relation to myself, but more in connection with my father or mother, or with some old neighbor whom I knew and loved; but I find that more and more, as we grow older, the thought of churchyards becomes familiar to our lives and brings a personal meaning of which childhood cannot know.

Farmington itself, when I last saw it, had not much changed except to grow older and more deserted than when I was young. Some of the shops and stores were vacant, and many of the people had gone to more prosperous towns; but the churchyard had grown larger with the passing years. The old part was wellnigh forgotten, but the new yard had stretched out until it quite covered the field where we used to chase the ball, and had then slowly crept off over a ravine farther back, and was climbing up the hill. I wandered for a while around the winding paths, and read again the inscriptions on the leaning stones; these had a meaning that I never felt before. When I read the ages of the dead, I found many a stone that told of fewer years than those that I could boast, and in the newer part I

spelled out the names of some of those little white-haired boys that once skipped along the winding path with me without the slightest thought that they so soon would be sleeping with the rest.

CHAPTER XII

CHILDHOOD SURROUNDINGS

THE life of the child is not the life of the man, and the town of the child is not the town of the man.

I can never see Farmington except through my boyhood's eyes, and no doubt the town and its people were not at all the same to the men and the women that they were to me. Every object meant one thing to them and quite a different thing to our childish minds. As I grew to boyhood, the mill-pond was only a place where I could fish and skate and swim, and the great turning wheel served only to divert my wondering eyes and ears as it kept up its noisy rounds. The old mill furnished us boys a place to hide and run and play our games. The whole scheme of things was ours, and was utilized by a boy's varying needs to help fill up his life.

To the kind old miller the condition of the water in the pond was doubtless quite another thing, and every revolution of the groaning wheel must have meant bread to him,— not only bread for the customers whose grain he ground, but sorely needed bread for the hungry mouths of those who had no thought or care whence or how it came, but only

unbounded faith that it would always be ready to satisfy their needs.

It is only by imagination, through the hard experience life has brought, that I know these familiar things had a different meaning to the old miller and to me. Yet even now I am not sure that they had for him a deeper or more vital sense. Perhaps the water for my swimming-hole was as important as the water for his bread. For after all both were needed, in their several ways, to make more tolerable the ever illusive game of life.

But I must describe Farmington and its people as they seemed to me,— as in fact they were according to their utility in the small schemes of a little child.

The world seems to take for granted that every parent is a hero to his children, and that they look to the father and mother as to almost superhuman beings whose power they cannot understand but can rely upon with implicit faith. Even the street-car signs tell this old tale, and advertise "pies like mother used to make." No doubt the infant looks with perfect confidence into the eyes of the mother who gave it birth, and in its tender years the child has the utmost trust in the wisdom and protection of the parent to whom it has always looked to satisfy its needs. But I cannot remember that in my youth either I, or any of my companions, had the feeling and regard for our parents that is commonly assumed. In fact, we believed that, as to

wisdom and general ability to cope with the affairs of life, we were superior to them; and we early came to see their shortcomings rather than their strength. I cannot say that I looked upon my mother even as a cook exactly in the light of the street-car advertisements, but I distinctly recall that often when I visited the woodsheds of neighboring children and was kindly given a piece of pie or cake, I went back home and told my mother how much better this pie tasted than the kind she baked, and asked her why she did not make pies and cakes the way the neighbors did; but to all these suggestions I ever got the same reply,— if I did not like her cooking I could go elsewhere to board. Of course this put a stop to all discussion. I am quite certain that it is only after long years of absence, when we look back upon our childhood homes, the bread and pies are mixed with a tender sentiment that makes us imagine they were better than in fact they really were. I rather fancy that if our mother's cooking were set before us once again, we should need the strong primitive appetite of our youth to make it taste as our imagination tells us that it did.

As to my father, I am sure I never thought he was a man of extraordinary power. In fact, from the time I was a little child I often urged him to do things in a different way,— especially as to his rules about my studies and my schooling. I never believed that he ran the mill in the best way; and I used to think that other men were stronger or richer,

or kinder to their children, than my father was to us. It was only after years had passed, and I looked back through the hazy mist that hung about his ambitions and his life, that I could realize how great he really was. As a child, I had no doubt that any man could create conditions for himself; the copy-books had told me so, and the teachers had assured us in the most positive way that our success was with ourselves. It took years of care and toil to show me that life is stronger than man, that conditions control individuals. It is with this knowledge that I look back at the old miller, with his fatal love of books; that I see him as he surveys every position the world offers to her favored sons. He knows them all and understands them all, and he knows the conditions on which they have ever been bestowed; yet he could bury these ambitions one by one, and cover them so deep as almost to forget they had once been a portion of his life, and in full sight of the glories of the promised land could day by day live in the dust and hum of his ever-turning mill, and take from the farmer's grist the toll that filled the mouths of his little brood. To appreciate and understand the greatness of the simple life, one must know life; and this the child of whatever age can never understand.

After my father and mother,— whom I did not appreciate, and who, I am bound to think, but half understood me,— no other men or women came very near my life. My relations were with the boys

and girls,— especially the boys. The men and women were there only to board and clothe the children, and furnish them with a place to sleep at night. To be sure, we knew something of all the men and women in the town, but we saw them only through childish eyes. There was the blacksmith, who was very strong, and whom we liked and called "clever" because he sometimes helped us with our games. There was one old farmer in particular, who had a large orchard and a fierce dog, and who would let his apples rot on the ground rather than give us one to eat. We hated him, and called him stingy and a miser. Perhaps he was not that sort of man at all, and the dog may not have been so very fierce. No doubt someone had given them bad names, and the people preferred to believe evil of them instead of good. Then there was the town drunkard, whom all of us knew. We liked him when he was sober, although we were told that he was very bad; but he always laughed and joked with us, and watched our games in a friendly way, but when we heard that he was drunk we were all afraid of him and ran away. Then there was another man who kept a little store, and we knew he was very rich; we had no idea how much he was really worth, but anyhow we knew that he was rich. And so on, through all the neighborhood, we knew something of the men, and classified them by some one trait or supposed fact,— just as the grown-up world always persists it has a right to do. The women,

too, we knew even better than the men, for it was the mothers who controlled the boys, and in almost every case it depended on them alone whether or not the boys might go and play. Still, we children only knew and cared about the grown-up people in a remote secondary way. Every home was full of boys, and by common affinity these boys were always together,— at least, as many of them as could get away from home. As a rule, the goodness and desirability of a parent were in exact proportion to the ease with which the children could get away from home. I am afraid that in this child's-world my good parents stood very low upon the list,— much lower than I wished them to stand.

We children had our regular seasons' round of games and sports. There was no part of the year in which we could not play, and each season had its special charm. There might not have been much foundation for the custom, but somehow certain games always came at certain times. When the season was over the games were dropped unceremoniously and left for another year.

Of course the little creek and the great mill-pond and the river were sources of never-failing delight. I cannot remember when I learned to swim, but I learned it very young and very well; and it was lucky that I did, for I have been in deep water many times since then. The boys seemed to prefer water to land,— that is, water like a pond or a stream. We did not care for the kitchen tub and the wash-

basin. It was the constant aim of our parents and teachers to keep us out of the water for at least a portion of the time, and they laid down strict rules as to when and how often we should go swimming. But when boys are away from home they are apt to forget what teachers and parents say; and we always contrived to get more swimming than the rules prescribed. This would have been easier except for the fact that it generally took us so long to dry our hair, and our teachers and parents could often detect our swimming by simply feeling of our heads. I shall always remember that a boy was never supposed to be a complete swimmer until he could swim the "big bend." There was a bend in the river, which was wide and deep, and a favorite swimming-place for the larger boys. I well remember the first time I swam across, and I have accomplished few feats that compared with this. All my life I had supposed that the big bend was very broad and deep, until I made a special examination of the place on my last visit, a little time ago, and really it was so changed that I could almost wade across. Still, at that very time there were little boys in the stream just getting ready to perform the same feat that I had accomplished long ago.

The same water that served us in summer-time delighted us equally in the winter months. We learned to skate as early as we learned to swim. Our skates were not the fancy kind that are used today, but were made of steel and wood, and were

fastened to our boots with straps. Few boys could skate long without the straps coming loose; but then, a few difficulties more or less have little terror for a boy. It would be hard to make a town better fitted for boys than Farmington; even the high hills were made for coasting in the winter-time. In fact, nothing was lacking to us except that our parents and teachers were not so kind and considerate as they should have been.

In the summer-time we often climbed to the top of the hills and looked down the valley to see the river winding off on its everlasting course. Then we would fancy that we were mountaineers and explorers, and would pick our way along the hills with the beautiful valley far beneath. I do not know why we climbed the hills in the summer-time. It could not have been for the scenery, which was really fine; for boys care little for this sort of thing. The love of Nature comes with maturing years and is one of the few compensations for growing old. More and more as the years go by we love the sun and the green earth, the silent mountains and the ever-moving sea. It seems as if slowly and all unawares our Mother Nature prepares and ripens us to be taken back into her all-embracing breast.

But boys like hills and animals and trees, not so much because they are a part of Nature as for the life and activity they bring. So we climbed the hills and the trees, and went far down the winding stream for no purpose except to go, and when we reached

the point for which we started out we turned around and came back home. Still, since I have grown to man's estate I do the self-same thing. I make my plans to go to a foreign port, and with great trouble and expense travel half-way round the earth, and then, not content with the new places I have found, and longing for the old ones once again, I turn back and journey home.

Since the days when we children followed the crests of the hills along the valley, this lovely scene has fallen under the notice of a business man. He has built a hotel on the top of the highest hill, overlooking the valley and the little town, and in the summer-time its wide verandas are filled day after day with women, young and old, who sit and swing in hammocks, and read Richard Harding Davis and Winston Churchill, and watch for the mail and wait for the dinner-bell to ring.

With what never-ending schemes our youth was filled, and in what quick succession each followed on the others' heels! Our most cherished plans fell far short of what we hoped and dreamed. Somehow everything in the world conspired to defeat our ends,— and most of all, our own childish nature, which jumped from fad to fancy in such quick succession that we could never do more than just begin. Even when we carried our plans almost to completion, their result was always far short of the thought our minds conceived.

With what infinite pains and unbounded hopes

we prepared to go nutting in the woods! How many bags and sacks we took, and how surely these came back almost empty with the boys who started out with such high hopes as the sun rose up! How often did we prepare the night before to go blackberrying in the choicest spots, but after a long day of bruises and wasp-bites and scratches, come back with almost empty pails! Still, our failures in no way dampened the ardor of any new scheme we formed.

We could run and jump and throw stones with the greatest ease; but when we put any of our efforts to the test, we never ran so fast or jumped so high or threw a stone so far as we thought and said we could,— and yet our failures had no effect in teaching us moderation in any other scheme. I well remember one ambitious lad who started out to make a cart. He planned and worked faithfully, until the wonderful structure took on the semblance of a cart. Then his interest began to flag, and the work went on more slowly than before. For days and weeks we used to come to his shop and ask, "Will, when are you going to finish your cart?" We asked this so often that finally it became a standing joke, and the cart was given up in shame and chagrin.

When the snow was soft and damp, we often planned to make a giant snow-man or an enormous fort. We laid out our work on a grand scale, and started in with great industry and energy to accom-

plish it. But long before it was finished, the rain came down or the sun shone so hot that our work and schemes melted away before our eyes.

So, too, the grown-up children build and build, and never complete what they begin. When the last day comes, it finds us all busy with unfinished schemes,— that is, all who ever try to build. But this is doubtless better than not to try at all.

The difference between the child and the man lies chiefly in the unlimited confidence and buoyancy of youth. The past failure is wholly forgotten in the new idea. As we grow older, more and more do we remember how our plans fell short; more and more do we realize that no hope reaches full fruition and no dream is ever quite fulfilled. Age and life make us doubtful about new schemes, until at last we no longer even try.

Well, our youth brought its mistakes and its failures, its errors of judgment and its dreams so hopeless to achieve. But still it carried with it ambition and life, a boundless hope, and an energy which only time and years could quench. So, after all, perhaps childhood is the reality, and in maturity we simply doze and dream.

CHAPTER XIII

ILLUSIONS

AS I look back upon my childhood, it seems as if the world were an illusion and everything was magic that passed before my eyes. True, we children learned our lessons in our arithmetics and geographies and readers, but we only learned by rote and said them from our lips; they had no application to our lives,— they were only tasks which we must get through before our foolish parents and unkind teachers would leave us free to live. We seem to have breathed an enchanted air, and to see nothing as it really was. And still, can I be sure of this? Are the heartbeats of the young less natural and spontaneous than those of later life? Are the vision and hearing and emotions of youth less trustworthy than the dulled faculties and feelings of maturer years? Certain it is we children lived in a world that was all our own,— a world into which grown-up people could not come, from which in fact they had long since passed out never to return.

But we had our illusions and our dreams. Time and distance and proportion did not exist for us. Time is ever illusive to young and old alike; it is no sooner come than it is gone. The past is re-

gretted, the present disappointing; the future alone is trusted, and thought to be worth our pains. Childhood is the happiest time of life, because the past is so wholly forgotten, the present so fleeting, and the future so endlessly long. But how little I really knew of time, of youth and of age, when I was young! We children thought that old age lay just beyond the time when childish sports would not amuse. We could see nothing in life beyond thirty that would make it worth living, excepting for a very few who were the conquerors of the world. True, we dreamed of our future great achievements, but these were still far off, and to be reached in strange fantastic ways. The present and the near future were only for our childish joys. We looked at older people half in pity, half in fear. I distinctly remember that when a child at the district school I thought the boys and girls at the Academy were getting old.

As to my parents, they always seemed old; and when I was not vexed about things they would not let me do, I felt sad to think their days of sport were past and gone. I well remember the terrible day when they laid my mother in her grave, and the one consolation I felt was that she had lived a long life and that her natural time had come. Even now, as I look back on the vague remembrances of my mother, I have no thought of any time when she was not old. Yet last year I went to see the little headstone that marks her modest grave. I read her

name, and the commonplace lines that said she had been a good wife and a loving mother; and this I have no doubt was true, even though I found it on a churchyard stone. Poor soul! she never had a chance to be anything else or more. But when I looked to see her age, I felt a shock as of one waking from a dream; for there, chiselled in the marble stone and already growing green with moss, I read that she had died at forty-eight. And here I stood looking at my old mother's grave, and my last birthday was my forty-sixth. Was my mother then so young when she lay down to sleep? — and all my life I had thought that she was old! I felt and knew, as I sadly looked upon the stone, that my career was all before me still, and that I had only been wandering and blundering in a zigzag path through childhood and youth, to begin the career I was about to run. True, as I drew close to the marble slab to read the smaller letters that told of the virtues of the dead, I put on a pair of gold-rimmed glasses to spell the chiselled words. And these glasses were my second pair! Only a few days before, I had visited an oculist and told him that my old ones somehow did not focus as they should, but warned him not to give me a new pair that magnified the letters any more than the ones I had. After several trials he found a pair through which I could see much clearer than before, and he assured me on his honor that they were no stronger than the ones I was about to lay aside,— only they

were ground in a different way. And although I had lived on the earth for six and forty years, I believed he told the truth. I remembered, too, that only a few days before an impudent college football hero gave me a seat in the street-car while he stood up. But then college boys were always thoughtless and ill-mannered, and boastful of their strength. I recovered from the shock that came upon me as I realized that my mother had died while she was really young; and then my mind recalled a day that had been buried in oblivion for many, many years,— a day when I rested upon the same spot where I was sitting now, and when the tremendous thought of eternal sleep dawned upon my mind. No doubt it was my mother's stone that so long ago awakened me to conscious life. I remember that on that far-off day I was fifteen years of age, and that I consoled myself by thinking that at any rate I should live until I was sixty, which was so far away that I could not even dream that it would ever come. And now I was here again, and forty-six. Well, my health was good, my ancestors were long-lived,— all except my mother, who came to an untimely grave,— and I should live to be ninety at the very least. And then — there might be another world. No one can prove that there is not.

But I am lingering too long around the old graveyard of my childhood home, and if I do not go out into the living, moving world, no one will ever read my book. And still I fancy that I am like all the

other men and women who were ever born; we eat and drink, and laugh and dance, and go our way along the path of life, and join the universal conspiracy to keep silent on the momentous event that year by year draws closer to our lives.

Distance was as vague and illusive and as hard to realize as time. A trip to the next town, four miles away, awoke in my mind all the feeling of change and travel and adventure that a voyage across the sea can bring to-day. I recall one great event that stands out clearly in my childhood days. For months and months I had been promised a long trip with my older sister to visit my Aunt Jane. She lived miles and miles away, and we must take a railroad train to reach her home. For weeks I revelled in the expectation of that long-promised trip. I wondered if the train would really stop at our station long enough for me to get on board; if there would be danger of falling out if I should raise the window of the car; and what would happen if we should be carried past the town, or the train should run off the track. I am always sure of a fresh emotion when I think of the moment that we were safely seated in the car and the train began to move away. How I watched and wondered as the houses and telegraph poles flew past in our mad flight! And how I stored my mind with facts and fancies to tell the wondering boys when I returned! if indeed I ever should. I remember particularly how I pleaded with the train conductor to let me

keep the pasteboard ticket that had been handed to me through the hole in the little window at the station when I took the train. I felt that this would be a souvenir of priceless worth, but the conductor regretfully told me that he must deny my wish. It seems even now as if I journeyed across a continent, there were so many things to see that were wholly new and strange And yet my Aunt Jane lived only twenty miles away, and the trip must have been made in one short hour or less. Many times since then I have boarded a train to cross half the continent. I have even stood on the platform of the Oriental Express in Paris, and waited for the signal to start on the long journey across Europe to Constantinople; but I have never felt such emotions as stirred my soul when the train actually moved away to take me to see Aunt Jane.

Men and their works are indeed inconsistent. The primitive savage who dwelt at home went to a foreign land when he moved his tent or paddled his log canoe across the stream; but civilized man, with his machines, inventions, and contrivances, has brought the world into such close connection that we must journey around the earth to find something new and strange.

Not time and space alone, but also men and women, were illusive to our young minds. My Sunday-school teacher, a fat asthmatic woman, who always held her lesson-paper between her stiff thumb and finger covered with a black glove,

seemed a wonderful personage to me. How was it possible she could know so much about Palestine and Jerusalem and Judæa and the Dead Sea? Surely she had never visited these mythical realms, for there was no way to go. As easily might she have gone to the moon, or to some of the fixed stars; and still she talked of these things with the familiarity with which she would have spoken of a neighboring town. I never had any idea that she was like a common woman, until one day when I went to her house and found her with her sleeves rolled up and a great apron reaching around her dress, and she was washing clothes. After that, the spell was broken. How could anyone wash clothes if she really knew about Paul and John the Baptist and the river Jordan?

All the grown-up men seemed strange and unreal to my mind, and to have nothing in common with the boys. No matter what we did, we thought that if any man should come around he had a right promptly to make us stop. Most of the men never seemed to notice us, unless to forbid our doing certain things, or to ask us to turn a grindstone while they sharpened an axe or a scythe; and there were only a few who even knew our names. Once in a long while some man would call me "that Smith boy," but even then he seemed a little doubtful who I really was. If now and then a grown-up man took a friendly interest in our sports, or called us by our first names, we liked him, and would have

voted for him for President of the United States if we could have had the chance.

I well remember Deacon Cole. I used always to see him in one of the front pews at church. Every Sunday morning he drove by our home, and he was usually the very first to pass. He wore a ruffled shirt, a long black coat, and a collar that almost hid his chin. His face was long and sad, and he never looked to the right or left during the services at the church. I had no doubt he was a very holy man. He always took up the collection just before the benediction had been said, and his boots would creak as he tiptoed from pew to pew. I did not know just what a deacon was, or how anyone ever came to be a deacon. I remember I once asked my father; and although he could tell me all about Cæsar and Plato and Herodotus, he could never make it clear how Mr. Cole ever became "Deacon Cole." But one day when I was down at the mill, a farmer drove up to the door with a load of corn. He wore overalls, an old patched coat, and a big straw hat. I looked at him closely before I could believe that he was Deacon Cole, and then slowly another illusion was dissolved. I found that a deacon was a man just like my father and other men that I had known.

CHAPTER XIV

ABOUT GIRLS

IN Farmington the girls were of small account. Of course we had to tolerate them, for all of us had sisters, and then, too, we were told that we ought to treat them more kindly than the boys: but still we never really wanted them around.

The girls were much prettier than the boys, and they wore clean clothes, and generally shoes, and they had red or blue ribbons around their necks and white or colored sashes around their waists, and their hair was combed and fixed in long twists and tied with ribbon every day; and it was almost always as smooth and nice at night as when they came to school in the morning. As for us boys, our mothers combed our hair in the morning before we went to school, and occasionally with a fine-tooth comb; and when we left home it was usually parted on the side, and had no snarls, and lay down smoothly on the top of our heads,— but of course it was different before we got home. Sometimes even on our way to school we would turn somersaults, or walk on our hands, or " skin a cat " on the limb of a tree, and then our caps would fall off and our hair get pretty badly mussed. Then, too, we often ran and got warm, and had to take off our caps and fan our-

selves, and run our hands through our hair; and sometimes we wrestled and fell down, and things like that; and when we were not playing ball we often went in swimming at noon, and of course we could not keep our hair straight, and did not much care or try. But the girls were different; they never would do anything that hurt their hair, and if it got mussed the least little bit they always stopped and combed it out so that it looked almost as well as when they went to school. Generally they had little pocket looking-glasses; but even if they had not, any of the girls would help the others comb and tie their hair. But no boy would ever think of asking another boy to help him fix his hair; if he had done anything like this, he would have known pretty well what he might expect to get.

We used to wonder how the girls could keep their clothes so smooth and nice; for many of them had a long way to walk to school, and the road was dusty, and the dirt got on them from the long grass and weeds. We thought the reason they looked so well was that they were different from the boys. All of us liked to watch the girls, for they were so pretty and behaved so well. Their side of the schoolhouse was always the cleaner, and they never threw things on the floor, and their desks looked better, for the books and the slates were not tumbled around as they were on our side of the room. And there was no writing on their desks, nor carvings made with jack-knives; and in every way one could

tell which was their side of the house, even if no scholars were in the room.

The girls always behaved better in school than the boys; of course they whispered some, and giggled quite a bit, but they hardly ever threw apples, or brought in bugs, or set pins in the seat, or played jokes, or contradicted the teacher, or refused to do what she said. As a rule, they got their lessons better than the boys, and had more head-marks in spelling; and the teacher hardly ever made them stand on the floor, and did not keep them in at noon or recess or after school nearly as often as she did the boys. Then, if one girl told another that she could have a piece of her apple at lunch, or a bite of her stick candy, and took a pencil and marked off how much she could have, she would always bite in the right place, and never take any more,— if anything, she took a little less. But if a boy held up his apple and told another boy that he could take a little bite, not so far down as the core, very likely the boy would have to pull his hand back quick to keep his fingers from being bitten off. Really, no boy who was not green would let another boy take a bite of his apple, or his candy, or his gum. If he really wanted to give any of it away or trade it for something, he always took out his knife and cut off just the part he wanted to give away, or else he bit it out himself without taking any chances.

In the games we played, the girls were of no use; they could not run, or jump, or climb a tree, or even

throw a ball or a stone, or do anything that had to be done to play a game. Sometimes they stood around and watched us boys, and coaxed us to choose them in, and sometimes we let them play just as we did the little fellows. But if they ever played "fox and geese" or "pump-pullaway," they were sure to get caught the first thing, and they hurt the game. And when they had to catch you, of course you could n't run right through and knock them down just as if they were boys. Sometimes they coaxed us to let them play ball; but they never could hit the ball, and if they did it only went a little ways, and they could n't run to the first base, and you never knew where they were going to throw, and they were always in the way when you were running, and you were afraid to hit the ball as hard as you could, or to throw it very hard, when they were around. They were not much good to play "I spy," for they never could hide very well. If they got behind a tree, their dresses would stick out, and they could n't climb up on any high place, or jump down, or lie down behind a log so that you could n't see them; and even if they had a chance to get in first, they ran so slow that they were always behind when they reached the post.

Of course they could jump rope pretty well, but boys never played such games as jumping the rope; it was n't really any game at all. And then the girls always wanted you to help to turn the rope, and maybe there would be only a girl at the other

end. They did not quarrel with the teachers, and sometimes they told on us boys when we did something the teachers said we must n't do. When any of the boys got whipped hard in school, the girls cried and made a fuss; they never could stand anything like boys. Always at noon when we wanted to play ball or go in swimming, they would coax us to play " needle's eye," or " Sally Waters," or some such silly game. And in the winter, when we were sliding down hill, they never had a sled of their own, but would always want to ride with us; and we always had to be careful, and go only in the safest places, or they would fall off and get hurt and cry.

When we went skating, they wanted us to draw them on a sled on the ice, and they never dared go anywhere unless the ice was thick. If it bent the least little bit, they ran away and cried for fear their brothers would get drowned. When they had skates, they never would go out on the river where the water was over their heads; and they were afraid of holes in the ice, or of our building a fire on the ice, and we always had to put on and take off their skates. We never could pull the straps tight, because it hurt their feet and made them cold; and then their skates would get loose all the time, and we had to fix them; and they could n't go far away on the ice, for they were afraid they would n't get back before the school-bell or the supper-bell rang. Then, if they went out skating, or anywhere, after dark, they could not stay late, and we had to

stop and go home with them when they got the least bit cold. They never thought they could go home alone after dark, but they could have gone as well as not if they had only thought so. Sometimes they went sleigh-riding with the boys in a big sled; but this was n't half so much fun as hitching to cutters or jumping on sleds, and the girls never could do this.

When we went to see any of the other boys, we never went into the house. There was nothing to do in the house except to take off your hat and sit in a chair and tell the boy's mother how your mother was. We always played around the yard, or went into the barn or out in the woodshed, where we could have some fun. But the girls could n't go out and play in the yard or in the barn or in the woodshed, and if they did they could n't play anything that was good fun, but they would tease us to come into the house and look at the album while they told us who all the old pictures were, and would want us to stay in the sitting-room, or go into the parlor and hear them play a lot of tunes on the organ, and sing " Shall we gather at the river," and " Home, Sweet Home," and duets, and " Darling, I am growing old," and such things, and that would spoil all the fun. And after they got through playing the organ and singing, if it was n't time to go home they wanted us to play " Authors." This was the only kind of cards that girls could play.

They never were any good to go fishing, but they always wanted to go, and we had to bait their hooks, and take off the fishes if they caught any, but they hardly ever did; and they talked about how sorry they were for the fishes and the worms, but they let us do all the work. And if sometimes they went hickorynutting or chestnutting with us, we let them help to pick up the nuts while we had to climb the trees and shake them off; but they could n't carry any of them home, and when we came to fences they never would climb over them for fear they would tear their dresses, and we always had to go away around until we could find bars or a gate or take down the fence; and they were afraid of cows and dogs, and tried to keep us from going anywhere, and bothered us and held us back. And then when we took them we had to be careful what we said, and could n't run or walk very fast or go very far, and we always had to get back at a certain time, and could n't stay out after dark, or go across any water, or get into swamps or places where they could get their feet wet and catch cold.

Of course they got up parties, and wanted us to go; but these were always in the houses, and we had to wear our best clothes and our shoes, and be careful not to run against a chair, or tip over the lamp, or break anything, and we had to keep still, and could n't go outdoors, and had to play "needle's-eye" and "post-office" and charades and "blind-

man's-buff." Of course we had a little cake and sometimes some ice-cream, but never half enough, and we were always glad when the party was out.

In fact, in our boys' world there was no room for girls, except that we always liked to look at them and think how pretty and clean they were.

CHAPTER XV

FISHING

I WAS very small when I began to fish,— so small and young that I cannot remember when it was. In fact, my first fishing comes to me now, not as a distant recollection, but only as a vague impression of a far-off world where a little boy once lived and roamed. I am quite sure that I first dropped my line into the little muddy pool just behind our garden fence. I am sure, too, that this line was twisted by my mother's hands from spools of thread, and the hook was nothing but a bended pin. I faintly recall my protests that a real fish-line and hook bought at the store would catch more fish than this home-made tackle that my kind mother twisted out of thread to save the trifling expense; but all my protests went for naught. I was told that the ones she made were just as good as the others, and that I must take them or go without. All that remains to me of those first fishing-days is the faint impression of a little child sitting on an old log back of the cheese-house, his bare feet just touching the top of the little pool, holding a fish-pole in his hands, and looking in breathless suspense at the point where the line was lost in the muddy stream.

More distinctly do I remember a later time, when I had grown old enough to go down the road to the little bridge, and to have a real fish-line and a sharp barbed hook which my brother brought me from the store. I go out on the end of the planks and throw my line close up to the stone abutments in the dark shadow where the water lies deep and still. The stream is the same fitful winding creek that comes down through the meadow behind the garden-fence; but here it seems to stop and linger for a while under the protecting shadows of the little wooden bridge. I have no doubt that the spot is very deep, — quite over my head,— and with throbbing heart I sit and wait for some kind fish to take my baited hook. I learned later that I could wade clear under the bridge by pulling my trousers up above my knees; but this was after I had sat and fished. True, my older brothers had always told me that there was nothing but minnows in the muddy pool; but how did they know? Their eyes could see no farther into the unknown stream than mine.

I do not remember catching a single fish either behind the cheese-house or under the bridge; but I do remember the little bare-legged boy, with torn straw hat, waiting patiently as he held his pole above the pool, and wondering at the perversity of the fish. If I could only have seen to the bottom of the stream, no doubt I should have known there were no fishes there for me to catch; but as I could not see, I was sure that if I sat quite still and kept

my line well up to the abutment of the bridge, the fishes would come swimming up eager to get caught.

Many a time I was certain that the fishes were just going to bite my hook; but at the most critical moment some stupid farmer would drive his noisy clattering wagon at full speed upon the sounding bridge, and as like as not shout to me, and of course drive all the fishes off. Or, even worse, the driver would halt his team just before he reached the little bridge, get down from the high wagon seat, unrein his horses, and drive them down the sloping bank to the edge of the bridge to get a drink. The stupid horses would push their long noses clear up under the bridge, close to the stone abutment where I had cast my line, clear down almost to the bottom of the pool, and drink and drink until they were fairly bursting with water, and finally stamp their feet, and splash through to the other side, pulling along the wagon-wheels after them. Of course it was a waste of time to sit and fish after a catastrophe like this. But although I caught no fish, still day after day I would go back to the end of the planks and throw my baited hook into the pool, and sit and blink in the broiling sun and wait for the fish to bite.

But when I grew older I gave my fishing-tackle to my younger brothers and let them sit on the old log at the end of the bridge where I had watched so long, and, turning my back in scorn upon the little stream, sought deeper waters farther on.

I followed my older brother up to the dam, and sat down in the shade of the overhanging willow-trees, and cast my line over the bank into the deep water, which was surely filled with fish. Perhaps in those days it was not the fish alone, but the idea of fishing. It was the great pond, which seemed so wide and deep, and which spread out like glass before my eyes. It was the big willow-trees that stood in a row just by the water's edge, with their drooping branches hanging almost to the ground, and casting their cool delicious shade over the short grass where we sat and fished; and then the blue sky above,— the sky which we did not know or understand, or really think about, but somehow felt, with that sense of freedom that always comes with the open sky. Surely, to sit and fish, or to lie under the green trees and look up through their branches at the white clouds chasing each other across the clear blue heavens,— this was real, and a part of the life of the universe, and the life of the little child.

How many castles we built from the changing forms of those ever-hurrying clouds, moving on and ever on until they were lost in the great unknown blue! How many dreams we dreamed, how many visions we saw,— visions of our manhood, our great strength, and the wonderful achievements that would some day resound throughout the world! And those castles and dreams and visions of our youth,— where are they now? What has blasted

the glowing promises that were born of our young blood, the free air, and the endless blue heavens above? Well, what matters it whether or not the castles were ever really built? At least the dreams were a part of childhood's life, as later dreams are a part of maturer years. And, after all, if the dreams had not been dreamed then life had not been lived.

But here in the great pond we sometimes caught real fish. True, we waited long and patiently, with our lines hanging listlessly in the stream. True, the fishes were never so large or so many as we hoped to catch, but such as they were we dragged them relentlessly from the pond and strung them on a willow stick with the greatest glee.

I remember distinctly the time when some accident befell the dam, and the water was drawn off to make repairs. The great surface of stone and mud for the first time was uncovered to our sight, and I remember the flopping and struggling fishes that found themselves with no water in which to swim. I remember how we pounced upon these fishes, and caught them with our hands, and almost filled a wash-tub with the poor helpless things. I cannot recall that I thought anything about the fishes, except that it was a fine chance to catch them and take them home; although the emptying of the mill-pond must have been the greatest and most serious catastrophe to them,— not less than comes to a community of men and women from the sinking

of a city in the sea. But we had then only seen the world from the point of view of children and not of fishes.

But it was not until I was large enough to go off to the great river that wound down the valley that I really began to fish. I had then grown old enough to get first-class lines and hooks and a bamboo pole. I went with the other boys down below the town, down where our little stream joined its puny waters with the great river that scarcely seemed to care whether it joined or not, down to the long covered bridge, where the dust lay cool and thick on the wooden floor. Here I used to sit on the masonry just below the foot-path, and throw my line into the deep water, and wait for the fish to come along.

Where is the boy or the man who has not fished, and who does not in some way keep up his fishing to the very last? Yet it is not easy to understand the real joys of fishing. Its fascination must grow from the fact that the line is dropped into the deep waters where the eye cannot follow and only imagination can guess what may be pulled out; it is in the everlasting hope of the human mind about the things it cannot know. In some form I am sure I have been fishing all my life, and will have no other sort of sport. Ever and ever have I been casting my line into the great unknown sea, and generally drawing it up with the hook as bare as when I threw it down; and still this in no way keeps me from dropping it in again and again, for surely sometime

something will come along and bite! We are all fishers,— fishers of fish, and fishers of each other; and I know that for my part I have never managed to get others to nibble at my hook one-half so often as I have swallowed theirs.

Our youthful fishing was not all in dropping our hooks and lines into the stream. In fishing, as everywhere in life, the expectation was always one of the chief delights. How often did we begin our excursions on the night before! We planned to get up early, that we might be ready to furnish the fishes with their breakfast,— to come upon them after their night's sleep, when they were hungry and would bite eagerly at our baited hooks. How expectantly we took the spade and went to the garden and dug up the choicest and fattest worms,— enough to catch all the fishes in the sea! Then at night we dreamed of fish. We went to bed at twilight, that we might be ready in the gray morning hours. We started out early with lines and poles and bait. We stopped awhile at the big covered bridge and sat on the hard stone abutments, we put the wiggling worms upon the hooks and threw our lines far out into the stream. I cannot recollect that we thought of any pain to the fish, or still less to the worm,— though I do not believe that I could string a twisting worm over the length of one of those cold steel hooks to-day, no matter what reward might come. My father did not encourage me in fishing, although I do not remember that he

said much about how cruel it really was. But he told me never to take a fish that I could not eat, and to throw the small ones back into the stream at once. Yet though all the fishes that came up were smaller than I had hoped or believed, still I was always reluctant to throw them back.

The first fishing-spot seldom fulfilled our expectations, and most of us waited awhile and then went farther down the stream. Slowly and carefully we followed the winding banks, and we always felt sure that each new effort would be more successful than the last. But our expectations were never quite fulfilled. Now and then we would meet men and boys with a fine string of fish. These were generally of the class my father called shiftless and worthless; but as for us, we had little luck. Gradually, as the sun got higher in the heavens, we went farther and farther down the stream, always hopeful for success in the next deep hole. Finally, tired and hungry, we threw away our bait, and, with our small string of sickly-looking fish, turned toward home. Sometimes on our return we came upon a more patient boy who had sat quietly all day at the hole we left and been abundantly rewarded for his pains. Generally, weary and worn out, we would drop our fish on the woodshed floor and go into the kitchen to get our supper. Not until the next day would we again think of our string of fish, and then we usually found that the cat had eaten them in the night.

When we reflected on our fishing, it was a little

hard to tell where the fun came in; but on the whole this is true of most childish sports, and, for that matter, it holds good with all those of later years. But this has no tendency to make us stop the sport, or rather the hope of sport, for to give up hope is to give up life.

The last time I drove across the old covered bridge I stopped for a moment by the stone pier where I used to sit and fish. I looked over at the muddy stream, and the hard gray abutment where I had watched so patiently through many hot and dusty days; and there in the same place where I once sat and expectantly held my pole above the stream was another urchin not unlike the one I knew, or thought I knew, so long ago. I lingered a few moments, and shuddered as I saw the cruel boy push the barbed hook through the whole length of the squirming worm. I watched him throw the bait silently into the yellow stream, and, behold! in a short time he pulled out a little wiggling fish. I went up to him as he took the murderous hook from the writhing fish, and tried to make him think that it was so small that he ought to throw it back. But in spite of all that I could say, the little brute stuck a willow twig through its bleeding gills and strung it on a stick, as I had done when I was a little savage catching fish.

CHAPTER XVI

RULES OF CONDUCT

I WAS very young when I first began to wonder why the world was so unreasonable; and now I am growing old, and it is not a whit more sensible than it used to be. Still, as a child I was in full accord with the other boys and girls about the stupidity of the world. Of course most of this perversity on the part of older people came from their constant interference with our desires and plans. None of them seemed to remember that they once were young and had looked out at the great wide world through the wondering eyes of the little child.

It seemed to us as if our elders were in a universal conspiracy against us children; and we in turn combined to defeat their plans. I wonder where my little playmates have strayed on the great round world, and if they have grown as unreasonable as our fathers and mothers used to be! Reasonable or unreasonable, it is certain that our parents never knew what was best for us to do. Any how, I thought so then; and although the wisdom, or at least the experience, of many years has been added to my childish stock, I am bound to say that I think so still. Even a boy might sometimes be trusted to

know what he ought to do; and the instinct and teachings of Nature, as they speak directly to the child, should have some weight.

But with our parents and teachers all this counted not the least. The very fact that we wanted to do things seemed ample reason why we should not. I venture to say that nine-tenths of our requests were denied; and when consent was granted, it was given in the most grudging way. The one great word that always stood straight across our path was "No," and I am sure that the first instinct of our elders on hearing of our desires was to refuse. I wondered then, and I wonder still, what would happen if our elders and the world at large should take the other tack and persuade themselves to say "Yes" as often as they could!

Every child was told exactly what he ought to do. If I could only get a printed list of the rules given for my conduct day by day, I am sure they would fill this book. In arithmetic and grammar I always skipped the rules, and no scholar was ever yet found who liked to learn a rule or could tell anything about it after it was learned.

I well remember what a fearful task it was to learn the rule for partial payments in the old arithmetic. I could figure interest long before I learned the rule; and although I now have no trouble in figuring interest,— and if I have, some creditor does it for me,— still, to save my life, I could not now repeat the rule for partial payments. When was

there ever a boy who knew how to do a sum, or parse a sentence, or pronounce a word, because he knew the rules? We knew how because we knew how, and that was all there was of the matter. Yet every detail of conduct was taught in the same way as the rules in school.

I could not eat a single meal without the use of rules, and most of these were violated when I had the chance. I distinctly remember that we generally had pie for supper in our youthful days. Now we have dessert for dinner, but then it was only pie for supper. Of course we never had all the pie we wanted, and we used to nibble it slowly around the edges and carefully eat toward the middle of the piece to make it last as long as possible and still keep the pie-taste in our mouths.

I never could see why we should not have all the pie that we could eat. It was not because of its cost, for my mother made it herself, just the same as bread. The only reason we could see was that we liked pie so well. Of course we were told that pie was not good for us; but I have always been told this about everything I liked to eat or do. Then, too, my mother insisted that I should eat the pie after the rest of the meal was done. Now, as a boy, I liked pie better than anything else that I could get to eat; and I have not yet grown so old but that I still like pie. I could see no reason why I should not eat my pie when I was hungry for it and when it looked so good. My mother said I

must first eat potatos and meat, and bread and butter; and when I had enough of these, I could eat the pie. Now, of course, after eating all these things even pie did not seem quite the same; my real appetite was gone before the pie was reached. Then, too, if a boy ate everything else first, he might never get to pie; he might be taken ill, or drop dead, or be sent from the table, or one of the other boys might come along and he be forced to choose between going swimming and eating pie,— whereas, if he began the meal according to his taste and made sure of the pie, if anything else should be missed it would not matter much.

Our whole lives were fashioned on the rules for eating pie. We were told that youth was the time for work and study, so that we might rest when we got old. Now, no boy ever cared to rest,— it is the very thing a boy does not want to do; but still, by all the rules we ever heard, this was the right way. Since I was a child I have never changed my mind. I do not think the pie should be put off to the end of the meal. I always think of my poor Aunt Mary, who saved her pie all through her life, and died without eating it at last. And, besides all this, it is quite possible that as we grow old our appetites will change, and we may not care for pie at all; at least, the coarser fare that the hard and cruel world is soon to serve up generously to us all is likely to make us lose our taste for pie. For my part, I am sure that when my last

hours come I shall be glad that I ate all the pie that I could get, and if any part of the meal is left untasted it shall be the bread and butter and potatoes, and not the pie.

Of course we were told we should say "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am." I observe that this rule has been changed since I was young,— or possibly it was the rule only in Farmington and such provincial towns. At any rate, when I hear it now I look the second time to see if one of my old schoolmates has come back to me. But I cannot see why it was necessary for us to say "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," in Farmington, and so necessary not to say them in the outside world.

But while the rule made us say "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," it did not allow us to say much more. We were told that "Children should be seen and not heard." It was assumed that what we had to say was of no account. As I was not very handsome when I was young, there was no occasion for me to be either seen or heard. True, we were industriously taught how to talk, yet we had no sooner learned than we were told that we "must not speak unless spoken to." It is true the conversation of children may not be so very edifying, — but, for that matter, neither is that of grown-up folk. It is quite possible that if children were allowed to talk freely, they might have a part of their nonsense talked out by the time they had matured; and then, too, they might learn much that would

improve the conversation of their later life. At any rate, if a child was not meant to talk, his faculties of speech might properly be withheld until a riper age.

To take off our hats in the house, to say "Thank you" and "Please" and all such little things, were of course most strictly enjoined. It did not occur to our elders that children were born imitators, or that they could possibly be taught in any other way than by fixed rules.

The common moral precepts were always taught by rule. We must obey our parents, and speak the truth. Just why we should do either was not made clear, although the penalty of neglect was ever there. The longer I live, the more I am convinced that children need not be taught to tell the truth. The fact is, parents do not teach them to tell the truth, but to lie. Children tell the truth as naturally as they breathe, and it is only the stupidity and brutality of parents and teachers that drive them to tell lies. In high society and low, parents lie to children much oftener than children lie to parents; it would not occur to a child to lie unless someone made him feel the need of doing so.

I remember that when I was a child two things used to cause me the greatest trouble. One was the fact that I had to go to bed so early at night, and the other that I had to get up so early in the morning. I have never known a natural child who was ready to go to bed at night or to get up in the morn-

ing. I suppose this was because work came first, and pie was put off to the end of the day; and we did not want to miss any of the pie. Of course there were exceptions to the rule. We were ready to get up in the gray dawn of the morning, to go a-fishing or blackberrying, or to celebrate the Fourth of July, or on Christmas, or to see a circus come to town, or on any such occasion. And likewise we were ready to go to bed early the night before, so that we might be ready to get up. I remember one of my lies in connection with getting up in the morning. It was my father's custom to call us some time before breakfast, to help do the chores; and as this was work and the bed was warm, we were never ready to get up. On this particular morning I was called twice, but seemed to be sound asleep, and did not move. Thereupon at the next call my father came up the stairs, saying, "You know what you are going to get," and asking why I had not come before. There was nothing else to do, and so I promptly answered that I did not hear him the first two times. Somehow I learned that he surmised or found out that I had lied, and after this I regarded him as a sort of Sherlock Holmes. I did not know then, any more than my father did, that the reason I lied was that I was afraid of being whipped. Neither did my parents, or any of the others, understand that to whip us for lying only served to make us take more pains to conceal the truth.

We were given certain rules as to our treatment of animals. We were told to be kind to them, but no effort was made to awaken the imagination of the child so that in a way he might put himself in the place of the helpless beings with whom he lived. I am sure that had this been done the rule would not have been required.

In our association with each other, we were more simple and direct. When we lied, we soon found that our tales were disbelieved, and thus the punishment was made to fit the crime. But among ourselves we were generally truthful, no matter how long or persistently our teachers and parents had made it seem best for us to lie. We knew that the other boys cared very little for the things that parents and teachers thought important; and, besides, we had no jurisdiction over each other, except as the strongest and most quarrelsome might take for himself, and against him we always had the right to combine for self-defence.

I seem to be living again in the world of the little child, and so hard is it to recross to that forgotten bourne that I cannot help wishing to linger there. I remember that as I grew beyond the time to play base-ball and to join in other still more youthful games, I now and then had the rare privilege of revisiting these early scenes in sleep; and often and often in my waking moments, when I realized that I dreamed and yet half thought that all was real, I tried to keep my eyes tight shut that I might still

dream on. And if I can now and then forget my years and feel again the life of the little child, why should I not cling to the fond remembrance and tell the story which he is all too young to make us understand?

It is rarely indeed that the child is able to prevent the sorrows of the man or woman; and when he can prevent them, and really knows he can, no man or woman ever looks in vain to him for sympathy or help. But the happiness of the child is almost wholly in the keeping of men and women of maturer years, and this charge is of the most sacred kind. If schools for the education of children were closed, and those for the instruction of parents were kept open, surely the world and the children would profit by the change. No doubt men and women owe duties to themselves that even their children have no right to take away; but these duties are seldom inconsistent with the highest welfare of the child.

As I look back at the father and mother who nourished me, I know that they were both wise and kind beyond others of my time and place; and yet I know that many of my deepest sorrows would have been spared had they been able to look across the span of years that divided them from me, and in thought and feeling become as little children once again.

The joys of childhood are keen, and the sorrows of childhood are deep. Years alone bring the knowledge that in thought and in feeling, as in the

heavens above, sunshine and clouds follow each other in quick succession. In childhood the shadows are wholly forgotten in the brilliant radiance of the sun, and the clouds are so deep as to obscure for a time all the heavens above.

Over childhood, as over all the world, hangs the black pall of punishment,— which is only another name for vengeance and hate. In my day, and I fancy too often even now, parents believed that to "spare the rod" was to "spoil the child." It was not the refinement of cruelty that made parents promise the child a whipping the next day or the next week, it was only their ignorance and thoughtlessness; but many times I went to bed to toss and dream of the promised punishment, and in the morning, however bright the sunshine, the world was wrapped in gloom. Of course it was seldom that the whipping was as severe as the fear that haunted the mind of the child; but the punishment was really there from the time it was promised until after it was given.

Few boys were mean enough to threaten to tell our parents or teacher of our misdeeds, yet there were children who for days or even weeks would hold this threat over their playmates and drag it forth on the slightest provocation. But among children this species of cruelty was generally condemned. We knew of no circumstances that could justify the threat to tell, much less the telling. A "tattle-tale" was the most contemptible of boys,—

even more contemptible than a "cry-baby." A "cry-baby" did not rank much below a girl. Still, we would suffer a great deal without flinching, to avoid this name.

In my time boys were not always so democratic as children are supposed to be. Somehow children do pick up a great deal from their elders, especially things they ought not to learn. I know that in our school there was always the same aristocracy as in our town. The children of the first families of the village were the first in the school. In games and sports these would usually get the foremost places, and each one soon knew where he belonged in the boys' social scale. Certain boys were carefully avoided,— sometimes for sanitary reasons, more often, I fancy, for no reason at all. I am sure that all this discrimination caused the child sorrow and suffering that he could in no way defend himself against. So far from our teachers doing anything to show the cruelty and absurdity of this caste spirit, it was generally believed that they were kinder and more considerate and what we called "partial" to the children of influential parents than to the rest. And we were perfectly sure that this consideration had an important bearing on our marks.

As a general rule, we children did not care much to read; and, for that matter, I am inclined to think that few healthy children do. A child would rather do things, or see them done, than read about how someone else has done them. So far as we did

read, we always chose the things we were told that we should not. No doubt this came from the general belief that the imagination of children should be developed; and with the ordinary teacher and parent this meant telling about fairies, giants, and goblins, and sometimes even ghosts. These stories were always told as if they were really true; and it was commonly believed that cultivating the imagination of a child meant teaching him to see giants instead of men, and fairies and goblins instead of beasts and birds. We children soon came to doubt the whole brood of fairies, and we never believed in ghosts except at night when there was no candle in the room, and when we came near the graveyard. After these visions were swept away, our minds turned to strong men, to kings and Indians and warriors, and we read of them.

My parents often despaired about the rules that I would not learn or keep, and the books I would not read. They did not seem to know that all the rules ever made could cover only the very smallest fraction of the conduct of a child or man, and that the one way to teach conduct was by an appeal direct to the heart, an effort to place the child in harmony with the life in which he lived. To teach children their duty by rule, or develop their imaginations by stories of fairies and angels and goblins, always was and always will be a hopeless task. But imagination is more easily developed in the little child than in later years, because the blood flows faster and the

feelings are deeper and warmer in our youth. The imagination of the child is aroused when it really feels itself a part of all the living things with which its life is cast; feels that it is of kin to the parents and teachers, the men and women, the boys and girls, the beasts and birds, with whom it lives and breathes and moves. If this thought and this feeling take possession of the heart of the child, he will need no rules or lessons for his conduct. It will become a portion of his life; and his associations with his fellows, both human and animal, will be marked by consideration, gentleness, and love.

CHAPTER XVII

HOLIDAYS

I REMEMBER that we boys used to argue as to which was better, summer or winter. Each season had its special charms, and each was welcome after the other one had run its course. One reason why we were never sure which was best was that Christmas came in winter and Fourth of July in summer. There were other lesser holidays that counted little with the boy. There was Thanksgiving; but ours was a village of New England people, and Thanksgiving was largely a religious day. The church-bells always rang on Thanksgiving, although usually we were not compelled to go to meeting. Then, too, Thanksgiving was the day for family reunions. Our aunts and uncles and grandfathers and grandmothers came to take dinner with us, or we went to visit them; and we had to comb our hair and dress up, and be told how we had grown, and how much we looked like our father or our mother or our aunt, or some other member of the family; and altogether the day was about as stupid as Sunday, and we were glad when it was over.

Then there was New Year's day; but this was of little use. No one paid much attention to New

Year's, and generally the people worked that day the same as any other. Sometimes a belated Christmas present was left over to New Year's day, and we always had a lingering expectation that we might get something then, although our hopes were not strong enough to warrant hanging up our stockings again. Washington's Birthday was of no account whatever, and in those days Lincoln's birthday and Labor-day had not been made holidays. We managed to get a little fun out of April Fool's day, but this was not a real holiday, for school kept that day.

But Christmas and Fourth of July were really made for boys. No one thought of working on these days, and even my father did not make us study then. Christmas was eagerly looked forward to while it was still a long way off, and a good many of the boys and girls believed in Santa Claus. All the children had heard the story, but my parents always told us it was not true, and we knew that Santa Claus was really our father and mother, or sometimes our uncles and aunts and grandparents, and people like that. Of course we hung up our stockings; all boys and girls did that. We went to bed early at night and got up early in the morning, and after comparing our presents at home we started out through the neighborhood to see what the other boys and girls had got. Then there was the Christmas-tree in the evening at the church. This was one occasion when there was no need to

make us go to church; and we all got a little paper horn of candy, or a candy cane, or some such treasure, plucked fresh from the green tree among the little lighted wax candles stuck on every branch. All day long on Christmas we could slide down hill or skate, and sometimes we even had a new pair of skates or a sled for a present. Altogether Christmas was a happy day to us children.

Of course there were some boys and girls who got very little at Christmas, and some who got nothing at all, and these must have grieved a great deal; and I wondered not a little why it was that things were so uneven and unfair. I know now that it was cruel that this knowledge could not have been kept from the little child until he had grown better able to know and understand. I also realize that even to my parents, who were not the poorest, with so many children Christmas must have meant a serious burden both for what they gave and what they could not give, and that my mother must have denied herself things that she should have had, and my father must have been compelled to forego many books that would have brought him comfort and consolation for his buried hopes.

As I grow older, and see Christmas-giving develop into a duty and a burden, and often a burden hard to bear, I have come to believe less and less in this sort of indiscriminate matter-of-course gift-making. If one really wishes to make a present, it should be offered freely from the heart as well as

from the hand, and given without regard to Christmas day. With care and thoughtfulness on the part of parents, almost any day could be a holiday to little children, and they would soon forget that "Christmas comes but once a year."

But, after all, I think the boys of my time liked the Fourth of July better than Christmas. This was no doubt largely due to the fact that children love noise. They want "something doing," and the Fourth of July somehow satisfies this desire more than any other day. Then we boys ourselves had a great deal to do with the Fourth of July. In fact, there could not have been a real Fourth without our effort and assistance. As on Christmas eve, we went to bed early without protest on the night before the Fourth,— so early that we could not go to sleep, and would lie awake for hours wondering if it were not almost time for the Fourth to begin. We always started the celebration before daylight. The night before, we had put our dimes and pennies together and bought all the powder we could get the stores to sell us; and then the blacksmith's boy had a key to the shop,— and, anyhow, his father was very "clever" to us boys. By the help of this boy we unlocked the door, took out the anvils, and loaded them on a wagon. We got a little charcoal stove from the boy whose father had a tin-shop, and with it a long rod of iron; and then we started out, before day had dawned, to usher in the Fourth. We drew the anvils up and down the road, stopping

particularly before the houses where we knew that we would not be welcome. Then we unloaded one anvil, turned it upside down, filled the little square hole in the bottom level full of powder, put a damp paper over this, and a little trail of powder to the edge, and put the other anvil on top; then the bravest boy took the rod of iron, one end of which had been heated in the charcoal stove, and while the rest of us put our fingers in our ears and ran away, he boldly touched off the trail of powder,— and a mighty roar reverberated down the valley and up the sides of the hills to their very crests.

After saluting the citizens whom we especially wished to favor or annoy, we went to the public square and fired the anvils until day began to break, and then we turned home and crawled into our beds to catch a little sleep before our services should be needed later on.

It was generally eight or nine o'clock before we got our hurried breakfast and met again at the public square. We visited the shops and stores, and went up to the little knots of men and women to hear what they had to say about the cannonading, and intimated very broadly that we could tell who did it if we only would. Then we lighted our bits of punk and began the fusillade of fire-crackers that was next in order on our programme. At this time the cannon fire-cracker, with all its terrors, had not come; and though here and there some boy had a small cannon or a pistol, the noise was confined al-

most entirely to fire-crackers. Most of us had to be very saving of them; they were expensive in those days, and our funds were low, especially after the heavy firing in the early hours. We always felt that it was not fair that we should be obliged to get up before daylight in the morning and do the shooting, and buy the powder too, and once or twice we carried around a subscription paper to the business-men to raise funds for the powder; but this met with poor success. Farmington never was a public-spirited place.

There were always plenty of boys who could shoot a fire-cracker and hold it in their hands until it went off, and now and then one who could hold it in his teeth with his eyes shut tight. But this last exploit was considered dangerous, and generally was done only on condition that we gave a certain number of fire-crackers to the boy who took the risk. While we were all together, still, to hear someone else shoot fire-crackers was a very different thing from shooting them yourself. Although you did nothing but touch the string to a piece of lighted punk and throw the fire-cracker in the air, it sounded better when you threw it yourself than when some other boy threw it in your place.

Often on the Fourth of July we had a picnic in the afternoon, and sometimes a ball-game too. This, of course, was in case it did not rain; rain always stopped everything, and it seemed as if it always did rain on the Fourth. Some people said

this was because so much powder was exploded; but it could not be so, because it generally rained on picnic days whether it was the Fourth or not. And then on Saturday afternoons, at the time of our best base-ball matches, it often rained; and this even after we had gone to the neighboring town, or their boys had come to visit us. In fact, rain was one of the crosses of our young lives. There was never any way of knowing whether it would come or not; but there it was, always hanging above our heads like the famous sword of Damascus — or some such man — that our teachers told us was suspended by a hair. Of course, when we complained and were rebellious about the rain our parents told us that if it did not rain we should have no wheat or corn, and everything would dry up, and all of us would starve; but these were only excuses,— for why could n't it rain on Sunday, when there was nothing to do and no one to be harmed? Then, there were six other days in the week besides Saturday, and only one holiday in the whole long summer; and how could there be any use of making it rain on those days?

Another thing that caused us a good deal of annoyance was that Fourth of July and Christmas sometimes came on Sunday. Of course, either a Saturday or a Monday was usually chosen in its place; but this was not very satisfactory, as some of the people would celebrate on Saturday, and some on Monday,— and, besides, we could not have a "truly Fourth" on any day except the Fourth.

When we had a "celebration," it was generally in the afternoon, and was held in a grove beside the river below the town. Everyone went to the celebration, not only in Farmington but in all the country round. On that day the brass-band came out in its great four-horse wagon, and the members were dressed in uniform covered with gold braid. Some of them played on horns almost as long and as big as themselves; and I thought that if I could only be a member of the band and have one of those big horns, I should feel very proud and happy. There was always someone there to sell lemonade, which looked very nice to us boys, although we hardly ever had a chance to get any after the powder and the fire-crackers had been bought. There were swings, and things like that; but they were not much fun, for there were so many boys to use them, and, besides, the girls had to have the swings most of the time, and all we could do was to swing them.

Then we had dinner out of a basket. We always thought that this would be a great deal of fun; but it never was. The main thing that everyone carried to the dinner was cold chicken, and I hated chicken; and even if I managed to get something else, it had been smeared and covered over with chicken gravy, and was n't fit to eat,— and then, too, the butter was melted and ran over everything, and was more like grease than butter. Besides, there were bugs and flies and mosquitoes getting into everything, to say nothing of the worms and cater-

pillars that dropped down off the trees or crawled up on the tablecloth. I never could see any fun in a basket picnic, even on the Fourth of July.

After we were through with our dinners, Squire Allen came on the platform with the speaker of the day. The first thing Squire Allen did was to put on his gold spectacles; then he took a drink of water from a pitcher that stood on a stand on the platform; then he came to the front of the platform and said: "Friends and fellow-citizens: The exercises will begin by reading the Declaration of Independence." Then he began to read, and it seemed as if he never would finish. Of course I knew nothing about the Declaration of Independence, and neither did the other boys. We thought it was something Squire Allen wrote, because he always read it, and we did not think anyone else had a right to the Declaration of Independence. We all came up quite close and kept still when he began to read, but we never stood still until he got through. And we never had the least idea what it was about. All I remember is the beginning, "When in the Course of Human Events"; and from what I have learned since I think this is all that anyone knows about the Declaration of Independence,— or, for that matter, all that anyone cares.

When Squire Allen finally got through the reading, he introduced the speaker of the day. This was always some lawyer who came from Warner, the county-seat, twenty miles away. I had seen the

lawyer's horse and buggy at the hotel in the morning, and I thought how nice they were, and how much money a lawyer must make, and what a great man he was, and how I should like to be a lawyer; and I wondered what one had to study to be a lawyer, and how long it took, and how much brains, and a lot of things of this sort. The lawyer never seemed to be a bit afraid to stand up there on the platform before the audience, and I remember that he wore nice clothes,— a good deal nicer than those of the farmers and other people who came to hear him talk,— and his boots looked shiny, as if they had just been greased. He talked very loud, and seemed to be mad about something, especially when he spoke of the war and the "Bridish," and he waved his hands and arms a great deal, and made quite a fuss about it all. I know that he said quite a lot about the Declaration of Independence, and a lot about fighting, and how glorious it was; and told us all about Europe and Asia and Africa, and how poor and downtrodden and ignorant all those people were, and how free we were, all on account of the Declaration of Independence, and the flag, and the G. A. R., and because our people were such good fighters. He told us that whatever happened, we must stand by the Declaration of Independence and the flag, and be ready to fight and to die if we ever had a chance to fight and die. And the old farmers clapped their hands and nodded their heads, and said he was a mighty smart man, and a great man,

and thoroughly patriotic, and as long as we had such men the country was safe; and we boys went away feeling as if we wanted to fight, and wondering why the people in other countries ever let the rulers run over them the way they did, and feeling sorry they were so poor and weak and cowardly, and hoping we could get into a war with the " Bridish " and help to free her poor ignorant serfs, and wondering if we were old enough to be taken if we did have a war, and wishing if we did that the lawyer could be the General, or the President, or anything else, for he certainly was a great man and could talk louder than anyone we had ever heard. I usually noticed that the lawyer was running for some office in the fall, and everyone said that he was just the man that we ought to have,— he was such a great patriot.

After the speech was over we went home to supper; and after dark, to the square to see the fireworks. This was a fitting close to a great day. We always noted every stage of preparation. We knew just how they put up the platform, and how they fixed the trough for the sky-rockets. We knew who touched them off, who held the Roman candles, and who started the pin-wheels, and just what they all cost. We sat in wonder and delight while the pin-wheels and Roman candles were going through their performance; but when the sky-rockets were touched off, we watched them until they exploded in the air, and then raced off in the darkness to find the sticks.

After the fireworks we slowly went home. Although it had been a long day since we began shooting the anvils in the gray morning, it was hard to see the Fourth actually over. Take it all together, we agreed that the Fourth of July was the best day of all the year.

CHAPTER XVIII

BASE-BALL

MY greatest regret at growing old was the fact that I must give up playing ball. Even while I could still play, I began to think how soon it would be when I could no longer take an active part, but must simply stand and watch the game. Somehow base-ball has always seemed to me the only thing in life that came up to my hopes and expectations. And thus it is by Nature's fatal equation that the sensation that gave me the greatest pleasure has caused me the most regret. So, after all, in the final balance base-ball only averages with the rest. I know that, as a youth, I thought that nothing felt so good as a toothache — after it had stopped. Perhaps the world is so arranged that joys and sorrows balance one another, and the one who has the happiest life feels so much regret in giving it up that he comes out with the same net result as the one who feels pleasure in escaping a world of sorrow and despair.

But I meant to tell about my base-ball days. These began so long ago that I do not know the time, but I am sure they commenced as the game began, for base-ball was evolved from our boyish game of " two-old-cat and three-old-cat," which we

played while very young. Since I batted my last ball I have often sat on the bleachers of our great towns to see the game. But base-ball now is not the base-ball of my young days. Of course I would not admit that there are better players now than then, but the game has been brought to such a scientific state that one might as well stand and watch the thumping of some great machine as a modern game of ball. There used to be room for individual merit, for skill, for blunders and mistakes, for chance and luck, and all that goes to make up a game.

The hired players of to-day are no more players than mercenary troops are patriots. They are bought and sold on the open market, and have no pride of home and no town reputation to maintain. Neither I nor any of my companions could any more have played a game of base-ball with Hartford against Farmington than we could have joined a foreign army and fought against the United States. And we would have scorned to hire mercenaries from any other town. We were not only playing ball, but we were fighting for the glory and honor of Farmington. Neither had the game sunk to any such ignoble state that we were paid for our services. We played ball; we did not work at the trade of amusing people,— we had something else to do. There was school in the spring and autumn months; there were the grist-mill, the blacksmith-shop, and

the farms in the summer-time, and only Saturday afternoons were reserved for ball, excepting such practice as we might get in the long summer twilight hours. We literally left our callings on the day we played ball,— left them as Cincinnatus left his plough in the furrow and rode off to war in obedience to his country's call.

At school we scarcely took time to eat our pie or cake and cheese, but crammed them into our mouths, snatched the bat, and hurried to the ball-grounds, swallowing our luncheon in great gulps as we went along. At recess we played until the last tones of the little bell had died away, and the teacher with exhausted patience had shut the door and gone back to her desk; then we dropped the clubs and hurried in. When school was out, we went home for our suppers and to do our few small chores, and then rushed off to the public square to get all the practice that we could.

Well do I remember one summer Saturday afternoon long years ago,— how long, I cannot say, but I could find the date if I dared to look it up. When we got the new almanacs at the store about Christmas, we found out that there would be an almost total eclipse of the sun that year. The people far and near looked for the eventful day. As I recall, some wise astronomers hired a special ship and sailed down to the equator to make observations which they could not make at home. We children

smoked little bits of glass over a lighted candle, that we might look through the blackened glass straight at the dazzling sun.

When the day came round, there it was a Saturday afternoon! Of course we met as usual on the public square; we chose sides and began the game. We saw the moon slowly and surely throwing its black shadow across the sun; but we barely paused to glance up at the wonders that the heavens were revealing to our view. We did not stop the game until it grew so dark that we could hardly see the ball, and then sadly and reluctantly we gathered at the home-base, feeling that the very heavens had conspired to cheat us of our game. Impatiently we waited until the moon began to drift so far past the sun that his friendly rays could reveal the ball again; and then we quickly took our places, and the game went on. It could not have been too dark to play for more than twenty or thirty minutes at the most, yet this marvel sank into insignificance in comparison with the time we lost from our game of ball.

Our usual meeting-place was on the public square. This was not an ideal spot, but it was the best we had. The home-base was so near the hotel that the windows were in constant danger, and the dry-goods store was not far beyond the second base. Squire Allen's house and a grove of trees were only a little way back of the third base, and many a precious moment was lost in hunting for the ball in the grass and weeds in his big yard. The flag-pole

and the guide-post, too, stood in the most inconvenient spots that could be found. We managed to move the guide-post, but the mere suggestion of changing the flag-pole was thought to be little less than treason; for Farmington was a very patriotic town.

We played base-ball for many years before we dreamed of such extravagance as special suits to play it in. We came to the field exactly as we left our work, excepting that some of us would manage to get a strap-belt to take the place of suspenders. We usually played in our bare feet, for we could run faster in this way; and when in the greatest hurry to make first-base, we generally snatched off our caps and threw them on the ground.

We had a captain of the team, but his rule was very mild, and each boy had about as much to say as any of the rest. This was especially true when the game was on. Not only did each player have a chance to direct and advise, in loud shouts and boisterous words, but the spectators joined in all sorts of counsel, encouragement, and admonition. When the ball was struck particularly hard, a shout went up from the gathered multitude as if a fort had fallen after a hard-fought siege. Then every person on the field would shout directions,— how many bases should be run, and where the fielder ought to throw the ball,— until the chief actors were so confused by the babel of voices that they entirely lost their heads.

Finally we grew so proud of our progress in baseball that after great efforts we managed to get special suits. These were really wonders in their way. True, they were nothing but a shirt and a pair of trousers that came down just below the knee. But all the boys were dressed alike, and the suits were made of blue with a red stripe running down the side of the legs to help the artistic effect. After this, we played ball better than before; and the fame of our club crept up and down the stream and over beyond the hills on either side. Then we began sending challenges to other towns and accepting theirs. This was still more exciting. By dint of scraping together our little earnings, we would contrive to hire a two-horse wagon and go out to meet the enemy in foreign lands. In turn, the outside clubs would come to visit us. The local feeling spread from the boys to their families and neighbors, and finally the girls got interested in the game and came to see us play. This added greatly to our zeal and pride. Often, in some contest of more than common interest, the girls got up a supper for the club; and when the game was done we ranged ourselves on the square and gave three cheers for the other club, and then three cheers for the girls. This they doubtless thought was pay enough.

A game of ball in those exciting times was not played in an hour or two after the day's work was done. It began promptly at one o'clock and lasted until dark; sometimes the night closed in before it

was finished. The contest was not between the pitchers and the catchers alone; we all played, and each player was as important as the rest. Our games never ended with four or five sickly tallies on a side. A club that could get no more runs than this had no right to play. Each club got forty or fifty tallies, and sometimes more; and the batting was one of the features of the game. Of course, we boys were not so cool and deliberate and mechanical as players are to-day. We had a vital interest in the game; and this, more than any other activity, was our very life. The base-ball teams of these degenerate days are simply playing for pay; and they play ball with the same precision that a carpenter nails shingles on a roof. Ball-playing with us was quite another thing. The result of our games depended as much upon our mistakes, and those of the other side, as upon any good playing that we did. In a moment of intense excitement the batter would knock the ball straight into the short-stop's hands; it was an easy matter to throw it to first-base and head off the runner, and every boy on the field and every man in the crowd would shout to the short-stop just what to do. He had time to spare; but for the moment the game was his, and all eyes were turned on him. As a rule, he eagerly snatched the ball and threw it clear over the first-baseman's head, so far away that the batter was safely landed on third-base before the ball was again inside the ring. The fielder, too, at the critical

time, when all eyes were turned toward him, would get fairly under the flying ball, and then let it roll through his hands while the batter got his base. At any exciting part of the game the fielding nine could be depended upon to make errors enough to let the others win the game.

Then, as now, the umpire's place was the hardest one to fill. It was the rule that the umpire should be chosen by the visiting club; and this carried him into a violently hostile camp. Of course, he, like everyone else, could be relied on in critical times to decide in favor of his friends; but such decisions called down on him the wrath of the crowd, who sometimes almost drove him off the field.

It was a famous club that used to gather on the square. Whether in batting, catching, or running bases, we always had a boy who was the best in all the country round, and the base-ball club added not a little to the prestige that we all thought belonged to Farmington.

One game I shall remember to the last moment of my life. The fight had been long and hard, with our oldest and most hated rivals. The day was almost done, and the shadows already warned us that night was close at hand. We had come to the bat for the last half of the last inning, and were within one of the score of the other side, with two players out, and two on bases. Of course no more exciting situation could exist; for this was the most critical portion of the most important event of our young

lives. It came my turn to take the bat. After one or two feeble failures to hit the ball, I swung my club just at the right time and place and with tremendous force. The ball went flying over the roof of the store, and rolled down to the river-bank on the other side. I had gone quite around the ring before anyone could get near the ball. I can never forget the wild ovation in which I ran around the ring, and the mad enthusiasm when the home-plate was reached and the game was won. Whenever I read of Cæsar's return to Rome, I somehow think of this great hit and my home-run which won the game.

All the evening, knots of men and boys gathered in the various public places to discuss that unprecedented stroke. Next day at church almost every eye was turned toward me as I walked conspicuously and a little tardily up the aisle, and for days and weeks my achievement was the chief topic of the town. Finally the impression wore away, as all things do in this busy world where everybody wants the stage at once, and then I found myself obliged to call attention to my great feat. Whenever any remarkable play was mentioned or great achievement referred to, I would say, "Yes, but do you remember the time I knocked the ball over the store and made that home-run?" Many years have passed since then, and here I am again relating this exploit and writing it down to be printed in a book.

Since that late summer afternoon when I ran so

fast around the ring amidst the plaudits of my town, I have had my rightful share of triumphs and successes,— especially my rightful share in view of the little Latin I knew when I started out in life. But among them all fame and time and fortune have never conspired to make my heart so swell with pride through any other triumph of my life as when I knocked the ball over the dry-goods store and won the game.

CHAPTER XIX

AUNT MARY

LIKE everything else in my early life, my Aunt Mary is a memory that is shrouded in mist. I have no idea when I first heard of her or first saw her, but both events were while I was very young. Neither can I now separate my earlier impressions of Aunt Mary from those that must have been formed when I had grown into my boyhood. It was some time after she was fixed in my mind before I knew that there was an Uncle Ezra, and that he was Aunt Mary's husband. They had never had any children, and had always lived alone. Whenever either one was spoken of, or any event or affair connected with their lives was referred to, it was always Aunt Mary instead of Uncle Ezra.

When I first remember them, they were old, or at least they seemed old to me. They had a little farm not far from our home; and I sometimes used to go down the dusty road to their house for eggs, butter, and buttermilk. Aunt Mary was famed throughout the region for the fine butter she made; and, either from taste or imagination, I was so fond of it that I would eat no other kind.

Aunt Mary lived in a two-story white house with

a wing on one side. In front was a picket fence, whitewashed so often that it fairly shone. Two large elm-trees stood just outside the fence, and a little gate opened for the footpath from the road, and next to this were bars that could be taken down to let teams drive in and out. In the front yard were a number of evergreen trees trimmed in such a way as to leave a large green ball on top. A door and several windows were in the front of the house, and another door and more windows on the side next the wing, which was mainly used for a woodshed and summer kitchen. A little path ran from the gate to the side door, and this was covered with large flat stones, which were kept so clean that they were almost spotless. There was no path running to the front door, although two stone steps led down to the ground. The house was always white, as if freshly painted the day before. Each of the windows had outside shutters (which we called blinds), and these were painted blue. I well remember these shutters, for all the others that I had ever seen were painted green, and I wondered why everyone did not know that blue was much the most beautiful color for blinds. The front door was never opened, and the front shutters were always tightly closed. Whenever any of us went to the house, we knew that we must go to the side door. If perchance a stranger knocked at the front door, Aunt Mary would come around the corner of the house and ask him to come to the kitchen.

Through all the country Aunt Mary was known for her "neatness." This had grown to a disease, the ruling passion of her life. It was never easy to get any of the other boys to go with me to Aunt Mary's when I went for butter. None of them liked her, and they all knew that she did not care for them. I remember that when I first used to go there she would meet me at the side door and ask me to stay out in the yard or go into the woodshed while she got the butter or eggs. Then she would bring me a lump of sugar or a fried cake (which she called a nut-cake) made from dough boiled in lard, and which was very fine, especially when fresh and hot, and tell me not to get any crumbs on the stone steps or on the woodshed floor. Sometimes Uncle Ezra would come in from the barn or fields while I was there, and he always seemed to be kind and friendly, and would take me out to the pigpen while he poured the pails of swill into the trough. I used to think it great sport to see the grunting hogs rushing and shoving and tumbling over each other, and standing in the trough to get all the swill they could. None of them ever seemed to have enough, or to care whether the others had their share of swill or not. I shall always feel that I learned a great deal about human nature by helping Uncle Ezra feed his hogs.

Uncle Ezra was a man who said but little. I never found him in the house; he was always out on the farm, or in the barn, or sometimes in the wood-

shed. This seemed the nearest that he ever came to the house. Uncle Ezra was a short man with a bald head and a round face. He had white whiskers and a little fringe of white hair around his head. He had no teeth, at least none that I can remember to have seen. He was slightly stooping, and was lame from rheumatism; and he wore a round black hat, and a brown coat buttoned tightly around his waist, and trousers made of some sort of brown drilling, and almost always rubber boots. In the woodshed he kept another pair of trousers and clean boots, which he put on when he went into the house to get his meals, or after it was too late to stay outside. I never heard him joke or laugh, or say anything angry or unkind. He always spoke of Aunt Mary as "the old woman," and showed no feeling or emotion of any sort in connection with her. Whenever he was asked about any kind of business, he directed inquirers to "the old woman."

Aunt Mary was tall and thin and very straight. Her hair was white, and done up in a knot on the back of her head. It seems as if she wore a sort of striped calico dress, and an apron over this. No doubt she sometimes wore other clothes; but she has made her impression on my memory in this way. Poor thing! — like all the rest of the mortals who ever lived and died, she doubtless tried to make the best impression she could, and at some fateful time this image was cast upon my mind, and there it stayed forever, and gets printed in a book,— the

only one that ever held her name. The real person may have been very different indeed, and the fault have been not at all with her, but with the poor substance on which the shadow fell.

I can remember Aunt Mary only in one particular way; and when her name is called, and she steps out from the dim, almost forgotten past, I see the tall, spare old woman, with two or three long teeth and a wisp of snow-white hair, and a dress with stripes running up and down, making her seem even taller and thinner than she really was. I see her, through the side door which opened from the room which was kitchen, dining-room, and living-room combined. I am a barefooted child standing on the stone steps outside, and looking in through the open door. I am nibbling slowly and prudently at a delicious nut-cake, and wondering if there are any more where that one came from, and if she will bring me another when this is eaten up, and thinking that if I really knew she would I need not make this one last so long. Almost opposite the door stands the cooking-stove. I can see it now, with its two short legs in front, and its two tall ones in the back. There is the sliding hearth, used to regulate the draught. Back of this, and above the hearth, is the little square iron box where wood is put in; over this are the holes for pots and kettles; and farther back, and above all, is the tall oven almost on a level with Aunt Mary's shoulders. On the oven is a pan of dish-water, and she is wringing out a rag

and for the thousandth time wiping the spotless oven. When this is done, she goes downstairs to the cellar, and gets the butter in the little tin pail, then goes to the cupboard and finds another nut-cake and brings them to the door. Then she looks carefully down to the stone steps to see if I have left any crumbs, and puts the pail and the nut-cake into my waiting hands. Before I go, she asks me about my father and mother, my brothers and sisters; whether the washing has been done this week; whether my sister is going to take music-lessons this fall; whether there is water enough in the dam to run the mill; and then she bids me hurry home lest the butter should melt on the way.

Aunt Mary did not live in the kitchen because there was no other room. After a time I learned that there were a parlor and a spare bedroom on the lower floor, and that the front door opened into a hall that led to the parlor and then on to the kitchen at the back. As I grew older and gained her confidence, she told me that if I would go out in the tall grass by the pump and wipe my feet carefully she would let me come into the house. As I came up to the door, she looked at me suspiciously, to see that there was no dirt on my feet or clothes, and set me down in a straight wooden chair; then she kept on with her dish-rag, and plied me with questions as to the health of the various members of the family, and how they were progressing with their work. She never left the high oven, with its

everlasting dish-pan, except to wipe imaginary dirt from some piece of furniture, and then go back to wring the cloth from the water once again. Although she almost always gave me a nut-cake or a piece of pie, she never invited me to dinner, and always asked me to go outside to eat.

By slow degrees she told me about her parlor and spare bedroom. And one day, after watching me wipe my feet with special care, she took me into the hall, cautiously opened the parlor door, and let me into the forbidden room. As we went into the hall and the parlor, she took pains that no flies should follow through the doors; and then, when these were closed and we were safely inside the cool dark room, she slowly and cautiously pushed back the curtains, raised the window just enough to put through her long thin hand and turn the little blue slats of the window-blinds to let in some timid rays of light. Then she pointed out the various pieces of furniture in the parlor, with all the pride of possession and detail of description of a lackey who shows wandering Americans the belongings of an old English castle or country seat. On the floor was a real Brussels carpet, with big red and black flower figures. A set of cane-seated chairs — six in all — were placed by twos against the different sides of the walls; while a large rocking-chair was near the spare bedroom, and in the corner a walnut what-not on which were arranged shells and stones. Near the centre was a real marble-top table, with a

great Bible and a red plush album in the middle. A square box sheet-iron stove, with black glistening pipe, stood on one side of the room on a round zinc base. On the walls were many pictures hung with big red cord on large glass-headed nails. There was a crayon portrait of her father, a once famous preacher, and also one of her mother; two or three yarn mottoes in black walnut frames hung above the doors, and some chromos, which she said had come with tea, completed the adornment of the walls. The elegance of all I saw made the deepest impression on my childish mind. Not a fly was in sight, and everything was without blemish or spot. I could not refrain from expressing my admiration and surprise, and my regret that everyone in town could not see this beautiful parlor. Then Aunt Mary confided to me that sometime she was going to have a party and invite all her friends. Then she began looking doubtfully at the streaks of sunlight in the room, and casting her eyes around the ceiling and the walls to see if perchance a stray fly might have come through the door; and then she went to the window and pushed back the long stiff lace curtains, and closed the blinds, leaving us once more in the dark. Of course I never could forget that parlor, though Aunt Mary did not take me there again.

Sometime afterwards, when I went for butter, I missed her at the high oven where she always stood with the dish-cloth in her hand. When I knocked,

Uncle Ezra let me in. The big rocker had been drawn out into the kitchen, near the stove; and Aunt Mary, looking very white, sat in the chair, propped up with pillows. I asked her if she was sick, and she answered no, but that she had been "feeling poorly" for some time past.

Of course I must have heard all about her illness at the time, but this has faded from my mind. I remember only that Uncle Ezra came to the house one day, looking sad, and when he spoke he simply said, "The old woman is dead."

We children were all taken to the funeral. I shall always remember this event, for when we went through the little gate there stood the front door wide open, and we went in through the hall. Aunt Mary was lying peacefully in her coffin in the front parlor. All the chairs in the house had been brought in. Uncle Ezra sat with downcast head near the spare bedroom door, a few neighbors and relatives were seated in chairs around the room, and overhead, on the white ceiling, the flies were buzzing and swarming as if in glee. The old preacher was there, and I remember that in his sermon he referred to Aunt Mary's "neatness"; and here I know that Uncle Ezra groaned.

The day was rainy, and the neighbors had tracked mud on the nice Brussels carpet. I looked around the room that Aunt Mary had shown me with such pride and care. The muddy shoes of the neighbors who had gathered about the coffin were making

great spots on the floor; the ceiling was growing blacker each minute with the gathering flies. A blue-bottle, larger than the rest, was buzzing on the glass above Aunt Mary's head, trying to get inside the lid. The windows were wide open, the curtains drawn aside, and the blinds thrown back. Slowly I looked at the muddy floor, the swarming flies, and the people gathered in Aunt Mary's parlor; and then I thought of the party that she had told me she was going to give.

CHAPTER XX

FERMAN HENRY

IT was when I began to go to the district school that I first heard of Ferman Henry and his house. Just after we had waded through the little stream that ran across the road, we came in full sight of the place. The house stood about half-way up the hill that rose gently from the little creek, and in front of it was a large oak-tree that spread its branches out over the porch and almost to the road. There were alder-bushes and burdocks along the fence,— or, rather, where the fence was meant to be; for when I first knew the place almost half of it was gone, and the remaining half was never in repair. On one side of the house was a well, and in this was a wooden pump. We used often to stop here to get a drink,— for there never yet was a boy that could pass by water without stopping for a drink. I remember that the pump always had to be primed, the valves were so old and worn; and when we poured water in at the top to start it, we had to work the handle very hard and fast, until we got quite red in the face, before the water came, and then we had to keep the handle going, for if we stopped a single moment the water would run down again and leave the pump quite dry. I never

knew the time when the pump was in repair, and I do not know why it was that we boys spent our breath in priming it and getting water from the well. Perhaps it was because we had always heard that the water was so cold; and perhaps, too, because we liked to stop a moment at the house,— for Ferman Henry and his family were the "cleverest" people we knew. City people may not know that in Farmington we used the word "clever" to mean kind or obliging,— as when we spoke of a boy who would give us a part of his apple, or a neighbor who would lend us his tools or do an errand for us when he went to town.

I had always been told that Ferman Henry was a very shiftless man. The neighbors knew that he would leave his buggy or his harness out of doors under the apple-trees all summer long, exposed to sun and rain; and that he did not like to work. Our people thought that everyone should not only work, but also like to work simply for the pleasure it brought. I recall that our copy-books and readers said something of this sort when I went to school; and I know that the people of Farmington believed, or thought they believed, that this was true.

Ferman Henry was a carpenter, and a good one, everybody said, although it was not easy to get him to undertake a job of work; and if he began to build something, he would never finish it, but leave it for someone else when it was partly done. He was a large, fat man, and when I first knew him he wore

a colored shirt, and trousers made of blue drilling with wide suspenders passing over his great shoulders; sometimes one of these was broken, and he often fastened the end to his trousers with a nail that slipped through a hole in the suspender and in the cloth, where a button was torn off. He often wore cowhide boots, with his trousers legs sometimes inside and sometimes outside; but generally he was barefoot when we went past the house. I do not remember seeing him in winter-time, perhaps because then he was not out of doors under the big oak-tree. At any rate, my memory pictures him only as I have described him.

When I first heard of Ferman Henry, I was told about his house. This was begun before the war, and he was building it himself. He began it so that he might be busy when he had no other work to do; and then too his family was always getting larger, and he needed a new home. He had worked occasionally upon the house for six or seven years, and then he went out as a soldier with the three-months' men. This absence hindered him seriously with his work; but before he went away he managed to inclose enough of the house so that he was able to move his family in, intending to finish the building as soon as he got back.

The house was not a large affair,— an upright part with three rooms above and three below, and a one-story kitchen in the shape of an L running from the side. But it was really to be a good house, for

Ferman Henry was a good carpenter and was building it for a home.

After he got back from the war he would take little jobs of work from the neighbors now and then, but still tinkered at his house. When any work of special importance or profit came along, he refused it, saying he must first "finish up" his house.

I can just remember the building as it appeared when I commenced going to the district school. The clapboards had begun to brown with age and wind and rain. The front room was done, excepting as to paint. The back room below and the rooms upstairs were still unfinished, and the L was little more than a skeleton waiting for its bones to be covered up. The front doors and windows had been put in, but the side and back windows were boarded up, and no shutters had appeared. Back of the house was a little barn with a hen-house on one side, and on the other was a pen full of grunting pigs, drinking swill, growing fat, climbing into the trough, and running their long snouts up through the pen to see what we children had brought for them to eat.

I remember Ferman Henry from the time when I first began to go to school. He was fat and "clever," and always ready to talk with any of the boys; and he would tell us to come into the yard and take the dipper and prime the pump, whenever we stopped to get a drink. He generally sat outside, under the big oak-tree, on the bench that stood by

the fence, where he could see all who passed his door.

Mrs. Henry was almost as large and fat as he, and she too was "clever" to the boys. She wore a gray dress that was alike from head to foot, and she never seemed to change it or get anything new. They had a number of children, though I cannot tell how many. The boys were always falling out of the big oak-tree and breaking their arms and carrying them in a sling. Two or three of those I knew went to school, and I believe that some were large enough to work out. The children who went to school never seemed to learn anything from their books, but they were pleasant and "clever" with their dinners or their marbles, or anything they had. We boys managed to have more or less sport at their expense. The fact that they were "clever" and cheerful never seemed to make the least difference to us, unless to give the chance to make more fun of them on that account. They never seemed to bring much dinner to school, excepting bread-and-butter, and the bread was cut in great thick slices, and the butter never seemed very nice. I know it was none of Aunt Mary's.

We boys could tell whether folks were rich or poor by the dinners the children brought to school. If they had pie and cheese and cake and frosted cookies, with now and then a nice ripe apple, we knew that they were rich. We thought bread-and-butter the poorest kind of a lunch; and sometimes

we would stop on the way and open our dinner-pails and throw it out.

We always knew the Henrys were poor. They had no farm, only a bit of land along the road that ran a little way up the hill. They kept one cow, and sometimes a horse, and two or three long-eared hounds that used to hunt at night, their deep howls filling the valley with doleful sounds.

Everyone said that Ferman Henry would work only when his money was all gone, and that when he had enough ahead for a few weeks he would give up his job. Sometimes he would work at the saw-mill and get a few more boards for his house, or at the country store and get nails or glass. After he came back from his three-months' service he was given a small pension, and for a few days after every quarterly payment the family lived as well as the best, and sometimes even bought a little more material for the house.

Year after year, as the family grew, he added to the building, sometimes plastering a room, sometimes putting in a window or a door; and he always said it would be finished soon.

But however poor they were, every time a circus came near the town the whole family would go. The richest people in the village had never been to as many circuses as the Henry boys; and even if they knew nothing about the Romans or the Greeks, they could tell all about the latest feats of skill and strength.

I often saw Ferman Henry tinkering around the mill, where he came to do some odd job to get a sack of meal or flour. Once I well remember that the water-wheel had broken down and we had to stop the mill for several days; my father tried to get him to come and fix the wheel, but he said he really had not the time,— that he must finish up his house before cold weather set in.

As long as I went up and down the country road to school, I saw Ferman Henry's unfinished house. We boys used to speculate and wonder as to when it would be done, and how it would look when it finally should be finished. Our elders always told us that Ferman Henry was too shiftless and lazy ever to complete his house, and warned us by his example. When we left our task undone, or made excuses for our idleness, they asked us if we wanted to grow up as shiftless and lazy as Ferman Henry.

After I left the district school, and went the other way to the Academy in the town, I still used to hear about Ferman Henry's house. The people at the stores would ask him how the work was coming on; and he always answered that he would plaster his house in the fall, or paint it in the spring, or finish it next year.

Before I left Farmington, the growing Henry family seemed to fill every crack and crevice of the house. The kitchen had been inclosed, but the porch was not yet done. The shutters were still wanting, the plastering was not complete, and the

outside was yet unpainted; but he always said that he would go at it in a few days and get it done.

The last time I went to Farmington I drove past the house. Ferman Henry sat upon the little bench under the big oak-tree. A pail of water, with a dipper in it, stood by the pump. Mrs. Henry came out to see if I had grown. A group of children were grubbing dirt in the front yard. I drew up for a moment under the old tree, in the spot where I had so often rested when a child. Ferman Henry seemed little changed. The years had slipped over him like days or weeks, and scarcely left a furrow on his face or whitened a single hair. At my questioning surprise, he told me that the small children in the yard belonged to his sons who lived upstairs. I looked at the house, now falling to decay. The roof was badly patched, the weather-boards were loose; the porch had not been finished, and the building had never seen a coat of paint. I asked after his health and prosperity. He told me that all the family were well, and that he was getting on all right, and expected to finish his house that fall and paint it in the spring. Out in the back yard I heard the hogs grunting in the pen, as in the old-time days. I saw the laughing children playing in the dirt. Mrs. Henry stood on the porch outside, and Ferman sat on the old bench and smiled benignly on me as I drove away. Then I fell to musing as to who was the wiser,— he or I.

CHAPTER XXI

AUNT LOUISA

IF I had only known, when I opened the long-closed door of the past, how fondly I should linger around the old familiar haunts, I am sure that I never should have taken a look back. I intended only to set down the few events that connect me with to-day. I did not know that the child was alien to the man, and that the world in which he lived was not the gray old world I know, but a bright green spot where the sun shone and the birds sang all day long, and the passing cloud left its shower only to make the landscape fairer and brighter than before.

And here, once more, while all reluctantly I was about to turn the bolt on that other world, comes a long-forgotten scene, and a host of memories that clamor for a place in the pages of my book. I cannot imagine why they come, or what relation they bear to the important events of a living world. I had thought them as dead as the tenants of the oldest and most forgotten grave that had long since lost its head-stone and was only a sunken spot in the old churchyard.

But there is the picture on my mind,— so clear and strong that I can hardly think the scientists tell

the truth when they say that our bodies are made entirely new every seven years. I am still a child at the district school. The day is over, and I have come back down the long white country road to the little home. My older brother and sister have come from school with me. As we open the front gate we have an instinct that there is "company in the house"; how we know, I cannot tell,— but our childish vision has caught some sign that tells us the family is not alone.

"Company" always brought mixed emotions to the boy. We never were quite sure whether we liked it or not. We had more and better things for supper than when we were alone; we had more things like pie and cake and preserves and cheese, and we did not have to eat so much of the things we liked less, such as bread-and-butter and potatoes and mush and milk. Then, too, we were not so likely to get scolded when strangers were around. I remember that I used to get some of the boys to go home with me, when I had done something wrong that I feared had been found out and would get me into trouble; and we often took some of the children home with us when we wanted to ask permission to do something or go somewhere,— or, better still, we got them to ask for us. These things, of course, were set down on the good side of having company.

But, on the other hand, we always had a clean tablecloth, and had to be much more particular about the way we ate. We had to make more use

of our knives and forks and spoons, and less of our fingers; and we always had to put on our boots, and wash our faces and hands, and have our hair combed before we could go in to supper, or even into the front room where the company was. And when we spoke we had to say "Yes, sir," and "No sir," and "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am." And we were not supposed to ask for anything at the table a second time; and if anything was passed around the second time and came to us, we were not to take it, but pass it on as though we already had enough. And we were always to say "Please" and "Thank you," and such useless words,— just as though we said them every day of our lives. Sometimes, of course, we would forget, and ask for something without stopping to say "Please," and then our mother would look sharply at us, as if she would do something to us when the company was gone, and then she would ask us in the sweetest way if we had not forgotten something, and we would have to begin all over and say "Please."

Well, I remember that on this particular evening we all went round to the back door, for we knew there was company in the house; and when we went into the kitchen, our mother told us to be very still, and to wash our feet and put on our stockings and shoes, for Aunt Louisa was there. We asked how long she was going to stay; and she said she was not quite sure, but probably at least until after supper.

None of us liked Aunt Louisa. She was old, and had reddish false hair, and was fat, and took snuff, and talked a great deal. She belonged to the United Presbyterian church, and went every Sunday, and sat in a pew clear up in front and a little on one side. Father and mother did not like her, though they were nice to her when she came to visit them, and sometimes they went to visit her. They said she came to see what she could find to talk about and then would go and tell it to the neighbors; and for this reason we must be very careful when she was there.

Aunt Louisa was a "widow woman," as she always said; her husband had been killed by a horse many years before. She used often to tell us all about how it happened, and it took her a long while to tell it, and my father said that each time it took her longer than before. She had a little house down a lane about three-quarters of a mile away, and a few acres of ground which her husband had left her; and she used to visit a great deal, calling on all the neighbors in regular turn, a good deal like the school-teacher who boarded around.

I remember that we had a nice clean table cloth and a good supper the night she came, and we all got along well at the table. We said "Please" every time, and our mother never once had to look at us. After supper we went into the parlor for a visit with Aunt Louisa. This must have been only a little while before my mother's death; for I can

see her plainer that night than at any other time. I wish I could remember the tones of her voice; but their faintest echo has entirely passed away, and I am not sure I should know them if they were spoken in my ear. Her face, too, seems hidden by a mist, and is faded and indistinct. Yet there she sits in her little sewing-chair, rocking back and forth, with her needle in her hand and her basket on her lap. Poor woman! she was busy every minute, and I suppose she never would have had a chance to rest if she had not gone up to the churchyard for her last long sleep when we were all so young.

Aunt Louisa has brought her work; she is knitting a long woollen stocking, and the yarn is white. She puts on her glasses, unwinds the stocking, pulls her long steel needles out of the ball of yarn and throws it on the floor; then she begins to knit. The knitting seems to help her to talk; for as she moves the needles back and forth, she never for a moment stops talking or lacks a single word. Something is said that reminds her of her husband, and she tells us of his death: "It was nearly thirty years ago. He went out to the barn to hitch up the colt. The colt was one that Truman had just got that summer. He traded a pair of oxen for it, to a man over in Johnston, but I disremember his name. It was a tall rangy colt, almost as black as coal, but with a white stripe on its nose and white hind feet. He was going out to draw in a load of hay from the bottom meadow. It was a little late in the season,

but the spring had been dry, and it had rained almost all the summer, and he had n't had a chance to get in his hay any sooner. He was doing his work that year alone, for his hired man had left because his father died, and it was so late in the season that he thought he would get on alone for the rest of the year." I do not yet know how her husband was really killed, although she told us about it so many times, stopping often to sigh and take a pinch of snuff, and wipe her nose and eyes with a large red and black handkerchief. She said she had never felt like marrying since, and that she had no consolation but her religion.

After she had finished the story of her husband's death, she began to tell us about the neighbors. She seemed especially interested in some man who lived alone in the village and who had done something terrible; I cannot now tell what it was, and in fact I hardly understood then what she meant. But she said she had been talking with Deacon Cole and with Squire Allen, and they thought it was a burning shame that the men folks did n't do something about it — that Squire Allen had told her there was no law that could touch him, but she thought if the men had any spirit they would go there some night and rotten-egg him and ride him on a rail and drum him out of town. I cannot remember that my mother said anything about the matter, but she seemed to agree, and Aunt Louisa kept on talking until it was almost nine o'clock; then she said she

thought it was about time for her to go home. My mother said a few words about her staying overnight, but Aunt Louisa said she ought to go "so as to be there early in the morning." I know I thought at the time that my mother did not urge her very much, and that if she had, Aunt Louisa would most likely have stayed. Then my father told my older brother and me to get a lantern and go home with her. Of course there was nothing else to do. All along the road she kept talking of the terrible things the man had done, and how she thought the men and boys of the village ought to do something about it.

A few nights afterwards I heard that something was to happen in the town. I cannot now remember how I heard, but at any rate I went to bed, and took care not to go to sleep. About midnight my brother and I got up and went to the public square. Twenty or thirty men and boys had gathered at the flag-pole. I did not know all their names, but I knew there were some of the best people in the place. I am certain I saw Deacon Cole, and I know that we went over to Squire Allen's carriage-house and got a large plank which he had told the crowd they might have. The men had sticks and stones and eggs, and we all went to the man's house. When we reached the fence, we opened the gate and went inside and began throwing stones and sticks at the house and through the windows; and we broke in the front door with Squire Allen's plank.

All the men and boys hooted and jeered with the greatest glee. I can still remember seeing a half-dressed man run out of the back door of the house, down the garden path, to get away. I can never forget his scared white face as he passed me in the gloom. After breaking all the doors and windows, we went back home and went to bed, thinking we had done something brave and noble, and helped the morals of the town.

The next day little knots of people gathered around the house and in the streets and on the square, to talk about the "raid." Nearly all of them agreed that we had done exactly right. There were only a few people, and those by no means the best citizens, who raised the faintest objection to what had been done.

Aunt Louisa was radiant. She made her tour of the neighborhood and told how she approved of the bravery of the men and boys. She said that after this everyone would know that Farmington was a moral town.

The hunted man died a year or so afterwards, and someone bought him a lonely grave on the outskirts of the churchyard where he could not harm anyone who lay slumbering there, and then they buried him in the ground without regret. There was much discussion as to whether or not he should have a Christian funeral; but finally the old preacher decided that the ways of the Lord were past finding out, and the question should be left to Him to settle,

and that he would preach a regular sermon, just as he did for all the rest.

When it came Aunt Louisa's turn for a funeral, the whole town was in mourning. The choir practised the night before the funeral, so they might sing their very best, and the preacher never spoke so feelingly before. All the people in the room cried as if she were their dearest friend. Then they took her to the little graveyard and lowered her gently down beside Truman. Everyone said it was a "beautiful funeral." In a few months a fine monument was placed on the little lot,— one almost as grand as Squire Allen's. She left no children, and in her will she provided that all the property should be taken for the funeral and for a monument, except a small bequest to foreign missions.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SUMMER VACATION

IF I were to pick out the happiest time of my life, I should name the first few days of the summer vacation after the district school was out.

In those few rare days all thoughts of restraint were thrown away. For months we had been obliged to get up at a certain time in the morning, do our tasks, and then go to school. Every hour of the day had been laid out with the precision of the clock, and each one had its work to do. Day after day, and week after week, the steady grind went on, until captivity seemed our natural state. It was hard enough through the long fall and winter months and in the early spring; but when the warm days came on, and the sun rose high and hot and stayed in the heavens until late at night, when the grass had spread over all the fields and the leaves had covered all the twigs and boughs until each tree was one big spot of green, when the birds sang on the branches right under the schoolhouse eaves, and the lazy bee flew droning in through the open door, then the schoolhouse prison was more than any boy could stand.

In the first few days of vacation our freedom was

wholly unrestrained. We chased the squirrels and chipmunks into the thickest portions of the woods; we roamed across the fields with the cattle and the sheep; we followed the devious ways of the winding creek, clear to where it joined the river far down below the covered bridge; we looked into every fishing-pool and swimming-hole, and laid our plans for the summer campaign of sports just coming on; we circled the edges of the pond, and lay down on our backs under the shade of the willow-trees and looked up at the chasing clouds, while we listened to the water falling on the wheel and the dozy hum of the grinding mill. In short, we were free children once again, left to roam the fields and woods to suit our whims and wills.

But even our liberty grew monotonous in a little while, as all things will to the very young,— and, for that matter, to the very old, or to anyone who has the chance to gain freedom and monotony. So in a short time we thought we were ready to do some work. We wished to work; for this was new, and therefore not work but play.

When I told my father of my desire to work, he seemed much pleased, and took me to the mill. But I noticed that as we left the house he put a small thin book in the pocket of his coat. Later in the day, I found that this was a Latin grammar, and that he had really taken me to the mill to study Latin instead of work. I protested that I did not want to study Latin; that I wished to work; that

school was out, and our vacation-time had come; and that I had studied quite enough until the fall term should begin. But my father insisted that I ought to study at least a portion of the day, and that I really should be making some progress in my Latin grammar. Of course the district school did not teach Latin; the teacher knew nothing about Latin, and, indeed, that study did not belong to district school.

I argued long with my father about the Latin, and begged and protested and cried; but it was all of no avail. I can see him now, as he gravely stood by the high white dusty desk in the little office of the mill. Inside the desk were the account-books that were supposed to record the small transactions of the mill; but these were rarely used. The toll was taken from the hopper, and that was all that was required. Even the small amount of book-keeping necessary for the mill, my father scarcely did,— for on the desk and inside were other books more important far to him than the ones which told only of the balancing of accounts.

My father stands beside the dusty desk with the Latin grammar in his hand, and tells me what great service it will be to me in future years if I learn the Latin tongue. And then he tells me how great my advantages are compared with his, and how much he could have done if only his father had been able to teach him Latin while he was yet a child. In vain I say that I do not want to be a scholar; that

I never shall have any use for Latin; that it is spoken only by foreigners, anyhow, and they will never come to Farmington, and I shall never go to visit them. I ask my father if he has ever seen a Latin, much less talked with one; and when he tells me that the language has been dead for a thousand years, I feel still more certain that I am right. But he persists that I cannot be a scholar unless I master Latin.

It was of no avail to argue with my father; for fathers only argue through courtesy, and when the proper time comes round they cease the argument and say the thing must be done. And so, against my judgment and my will, I climbed upon the high stool in the little office and opened the Latin grammar, while the old miller bent over my shoulder and taught me my first lesson.

Can I ever forget the time I began to study Latin? Outside of the little door stands the hopper full of grain; a tiny stream is running down the centre, like the sands in an hour-glass, and slowly and inevitably each kernel is ground fine between the turning stones. All around, on every bag and bin and chute, on every piece of furniture and on the floor, lies the thick white dust that rises from the new-ground flour. Outside the windows I can see the water running down the mill-race and through the flume, before it tumbles on the wheel. The hopper is filled with grain, the wheat is tolled, the water keeps falling over the great wheel, the noise of the

turning stones and moving pulleys fills the air with a constant whir. My father leaves the mill to do its work, comes into the office, shuts the door, and tells me that *mensa* is the Latin word for "table." This is more important to him than the need of rain, or the growing wheat, or the low water in the pond. Then he tells me how many different cases the Latin language had, and exactly how the Romans spoke the word for "table" in every case; and he bids me decline *mensa* after him. Slowly and painfully I learn *mensa, mensæ, mensæ, mensam, mensa, mensa,* and after this I learn the plural too. And so with the whirring of the mill is mingled my father's voice, saying slowly over and over again, "*mensa, mensæ, mensæ, mensam, mensa, mensa.*" I stammer and stutter, and cry and mutter, and think, until I can scarcely distinguish between the whirring of the mill and the measured tones of my father's voice repeating the various cases of the wondrous Latin word.

Sometimes he lets me leave my lesson and go to the great pile of cobs that fall from the corn-sheller, and take off the kernels that the sheller left. But in a little while my hands are so red and sore that I am glad to go back to my Latin word again. Then he lets me cut the weeds along the edges of the mill-race; but the constant stooping hurts my back, and the sun is hot, and this, too, soon grows to be like work, and no easier than sitting on the high stool with the Latin grammar in my hand. Now and

then a farmer drives up to the mill with his team of horses or slow heavy oxen, and I try to make myself useful in helping him unload the grain. This is easier than shelling corn or cutting weeds or learning Latin; for it is only a little time until the farmer is gone, and then perhaps another takes his place. Somehow I never want these farmers or the boys to know that I am studying Latin at the mill, for they would wonder why my father made me study Latin, and what he could possibly see in me to make him think it worth the while. I wondered, too, when I was young; I could not understand why he should make me study it, as if his life and mine depended on the Latin that I learned. Surely he knew that I did not like Latin, and at best learned it slowly and with the greatest pains, and there was little promise in the efforts that he made in my behalf.

I could not then know why my father took all this trouble for me to learn my grammar; but I know to-day. I know that, all unconsciously, it was the blind persistent effort of the parent to resurrect his own buried hopes and dead ambitions in the greater opportunities and broader life that he would give his child. Poor man! I trust the lingering spark of hope for me never left his bosom while he lived, and that he died unconscious that the son on whom he lavished so much precious time and care never learned Latin after all, and never could.

But still, all unconsciously, I did learn something

from my lessons at the mill. From the little Latin grammar my father passed to the Roman people, to their struggles and conquests, their triumphs and decline, to the civilization that has ever hovered round the Mediterranean Sea. He, alas! had scarce ever gone outside the walls of Farmington, and had seldom done so much as to peep over the high hills that held the little narrow valley in its place. But through his precious books and his still more precious dreams he had sailed the length and breadth of the Mediterranean Sea,— and though since then I have stood upon the deck of a ship that skims along between the blue waters below and the soft blue sky above, and have looked off at the sloping, fertile uplands to the high mountain-tops of Italy, and even over to Africa on the other side, still my Roman empire will ever be the mighty kingdom of which my father talked, and my Mediterranean that far-off blue sea of which he told when he tried so hard to make me study Latin in the little office of the mill; and ever and ever the soft murmur of the blue white-crested waves crawling up the long Italian beach will be mingled with the lazy whir of the turning stones and my father's gentle eager voice.

The dust and mould of many ages lie over Cæsar and Virgil and Horace and Ovid. The great empire of the Roman world long since passed to ruin and decay. The waves of the blue Mediterranean have sung their requiem over this mighty Mistress

of the Sea, and many others, great and small, since then. The Latin tongue lives only as a memory of the language of these once proud conquerors of a world. And no less dead and past are the turning wheel, the groaning mill, the crumbling dam, and the kindly voice that told me of the wonders of the Roman world. And as my mind goes back to the Latin grammar and the little dusty office in the mill, I cannot suppress the longing hope that somewhere out beyond the stars my patient father has found a haven where they still can speak the Latin tongue, and where he comes nearer to Cæsar and Virgil and Ovid and the blue Mediterranean Sea than while the high hills and stern conditions of his life kept him busy grinding corn. At all events, I am sure that when my ears are dulled to all earthly sounds, I shall fancy that I hear the falling water and the turning wheel and the groaning mill, and with them the long-silenced voice repeating, in grave, almost religious tones,—

Mensa, mensæ, mensæ, mensam, mensa, mensa.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW I FAILED

SOMEHOW I can identify my present self only with the boy who went to the Academy on the hill. Back of this, all seems a vision and a dream; and the little child from whom I grew is only one of the old boyish group for whose sake the sun revolved and the changing seasons came and went.

It must be that for a long time I looked forward to going to the Academy as an event in my boyish life. For I know that when I first went up the hill, I wore a collar and a necktie and shoes,— or, rather, boots. I must have felt then that I was growing to be a man, and that it was almost time to put off childish things. When I went to the Academy, we called the teacher "Professor," and he in turn no longer called me Johnny, or even John, but spoke to me as "Smith." A certain dignity and individuality had come to me from some source, I knew not where. When we boys came from the playground into the open door, it was not quite the mad rush of noisy, boisterous urchins that carried all before it, like a rushing flood, in the little district school.

Almost unconsciously some new idea of duty and obligation began to dawn upon my mind, and I had

even a faint conception that the lessons of the books would be related in some way to my future life. Among us boys, in our relation to each other, the difference was not quite so great as that between the teacher and ourselves; but our bearing toward the girls was still more changed. In the district school they had seemed only different, and rather in the way, or at least of no special interest or importance in the scheme. Now, we stood before them quite abashed and awed. They had put on long dresses, and had taken on a reserved and distant air; and much that we said and did in the Academy was with the conscious thought of how it would look to them. This, too, was a reason why we should wear our collars and our boots, and comb our hair, and not be found at the bottom of the class.

I began about this time to get letters at the post-office,— letters addressed directly to me, and which I could open first, and show to the others or not as I saw fit. And I began to know about affairs, especially to take an interest in politics, and to know our side — which of course was always beaten. I, like all the rest of the boys, inherited my politics and my religion. I said,— like all the boys; but I should have said like all people, whether boys or men. So little do we have the habit of thought, that our opinions on religion and politics and life are only such as have come down to us from ignorant and remote ancestors, influenced we know not how.

So, too, the same feeling seemed to steal over us at home and in our family group. The old sitting-room was quieter and wore a more serious look as we gathered round the lighted lamp on the big table with our books. The lessons were always tasks, but we tried to get through them for the sake of the magazine or book of travel or adventure that we could read when the work was done. My father was as helpful and interested as ever in our studies, and constantly told us how this task and that would affect our future lives. More and more he made clear to us his intense desire that we should reach the things that had been beyond his grasp.

Almost unconsciously I grew into sympathy with his ideals and his life, seeing faintly the grand visions that were always clear to him, and bewailing more and more my own indolence and love of pleasure that made them seem so hard for me to reach. I learned to understand the tragedy of his obscure and hidden life, and the long and bitter contest he had waged within the narrow shadow of the stubborn little town where he had lived and struggled and hoped so long. It was many years before I came to know that the smaller the world in which we move, the more impossible it is to break the prejudices and conventions that bind us down. And so it was many, many years before I realized what must have been my father's life.

As a little child, I heard my father tell of Frederick Douglass, Parker Pillsbury, Sojourner Truth,

Wendell Phillips, and the rest of that advance army of reformers, black and white, who went up and down the land arousing the dulled conscience of the people to a sense of justice to the slave. They used to make my father's home their stopping-place, and any sort of vacant room was the forum where they told of the black man's wrongs. My father lived to see these disturbers canonized by the public opinion that is ever ready to follow in the wake of a battle fought to a successful end. But when his little world was ready to rejoice with him over the freedom of the slave, he had moved his soiled and tattered tent to a new battlefield and was fighting the same stubborn, sullen, threatening public opinion for a new and yet more doubtful cause. The same determined band of agitators used still to come when I had grown to be a youth. These had seen visions of a higher and broader religious life, and a fuller measure of freedom and justice for the poor than the world had ever known. Like the despised tramp, they seemed to have marked my father's gate-post, and could not pass his door. They were always poor, often ragged, and a far-off look seemed to haunt their eyes, as if gazing into space at something beyond the stars. Some little room was found where a handful of my father's friends would gather, sometimes coming from miles around to listen to the voices crying in the wilderness, calling the heedless world to repent before it should be too late. I cannot remember when I did not go to these

little gatherings of the elect and drink in every word that fell upon my ears. Poor boy! I am almost sorry for myself. I listened so rapturously and believed so strongly, and knew so well that the kingdom of heaven would surely come in a little while. And though almost every night through all these long and weary years I have looked with the same unflagging hope for the promised star that should be rising in the east, still it has not come; but no matter how great the trial and disappointment and delay, I am sure I shall always peer out into the darkness for this belated star, until I am so blind that I could not see it if it were really there.

After these wandering minstrels returned from their meetings to our home, they would sit with my father for hours in his little study, where they told each other of their visions and their hopes. Many a time, as I lay in my bed, I listened to their words coming through the crack with the streak of lamplight at the bottom of the door, until my weary eyes would close in the full glow of the brilliant rainbow they had painted from their dreams.

After all, I am glad that my father and his footsore comrades dreamed their dreams. I am glad they lived above the sordid world, in that ethereal realm which none but the blindly devoted ever see; for I know that their visions raised my father from the narrow valley, the dusty mill, the small life of commonplace, to the great broad heights where he really lived and died.

And I am glad that as a youth and a little child it was given me to catch one glimpse of these exalted realms, and to feel one aspiration for the devoted life they lived; for however truly I may know that this ideal land was but a dream that would never come, however I may have clung to the valleys, the flesh-pots, and the substantial things, I am sure that some part of this feeling abides with me, and that its tender chord of sentiment and memory reaches back to that hallowed land of childhood and of youth, and still seeks to draw me toward the heights on which my father lived.

I never knew that I was growing from the child to the youth; that the life and experience and even the boy of the district school was passing forever into the realm of clouds and myth. Neither can I remember when I grew from the youth to the man, nor when the first stoop came to my shoulders, the first glint of white to my hair, or the first crease upon my face. I know that I wear glasses now,—but how did my sight begin to fail, and in what one moment of all the fleeting millions that hurried past did I first need to put glasses on my eyes? How lightly and gently time lays its hand upon all who live! I can dimly remember a period when I was very small, and I can distinctly remember when I went to the Academy on the hill and began to think of maturer things if not to have maturer thoughts. I remember that I began to realize that my father was growing old; he made mistakes in names, and

hesitated about those he knew full well. Still, this is not a sure sign of growing years, for I find that I am doing this myself, and many times lately have determined that I must take more pains about my memory, and cultivate it rather than continue to be as careless as I have always been. And only yesterday around an accustomed table with a few choice friends, I told a long and detailed story that I was sure was very clever and exactly to the point. I had no doubt that the pleasant tale would set the table in a roar. But although all the guests were most considerate and kind and seemed to laugh with the greatest glee, still there was something in their eyes and a certain cadence in their tones that made me sure that sometime and somewhere I had told them this same story at least once before.

I slowly realized that many plans my father seemed to believe he would carry out could never come to pass. I knew that for a long time he had talked of building a new mill. True, he did not say when or how,— but he surely would sometime build the mill. At first I used to think he would; and we often talked of the mill, and just where it would stand, and how many run of stones the trade demanded, and whether we should have an engine to use when there was no water in the pond. But gradually I came to know that my father never would live to build another mill, and that doubtless no one else would replace the one he had run so long. Yet he kept talking of the mill, as if it would

surely come. Nature, after all, is not quite so brutal as she might be. However old and gray and feeble her children grow, she never lets them give up hope while life remains.

Even when my father talked with less confidence of the mill, he was sure to build a new water-wheel, for the old one had turned over and over so many times that there was scarce a sound place no matter where it turned. But this, too, I slowly found would never be; yet after a while I grew to encouraging him in his illusions of what he would sometime do, and even in his wilder and fonder illusions of what I would sometime do. Gradually I knew that he stooped more and rested oftener, and that his face was whiter; and I forgot his age, and never would let anyone tell me how old he was.

As I grew older, I came to have a stricter feeling of right and wrong,— to see clearly the sharp lines that separate the good and bad, to grow hard and unforgiving and more intolerant of sin. But this, like the measles, whooping-cough, and other childish complaints, I luckily lived through. It is one of the errors of childhood to believe in sin, to see clearly the division between the good and the bad; and, strangely enough, teachers and parents encourage this illusion of the young. It is only as we grow into maturer years that we learn that there are no hard-and-fast rules of life, no straight clear lines between right and wrong. It is only our mistakes and failures and trials and sins that teach how really

alike are all human souls, and how strong is the fate that overrides all earthly schemes. It is only life that makes us know that pity and charity and love are the chief virtues, and cruelty and hardness and selfishness the greatest sins.

As I grew older, one characteristic of my childhood clung about me still. My plans never came out as I expected, and none of the visions of my brain grew into the perfect thing of which I hoped and dreamed. I never seemed able to finish any work that I began; some more alluring prospect ever beckoned me toward achievements grander than my brain had conceived before. The work was contrived, the plan was formed, the material prepared,— but the structure was only just begun.

And so this poor book but illustrates my life. Long I had hoped to write my tale, much I had planned to tell my story; and here, after all my hopes and plans, I have gone off in quite another way, babbling of the schemes of my boyhood days, the thoughts and desires, the hopes and feelings, of a little child. So long and so fondly have I lingered in this fairy-land that now it is too late, and I must close the book before my story really has begun.

That fatal trip back to my old home was the cause of my undoing, and has robbed me of the fame that I had hoped to win. But I felt that I could not write the story unless I went back once

more to visit the town of my childhood, and see the companions of my early life. But what a revelation came with this simple journey to the little valley where my father lived! I had looked at my face in the glass each day for many years, and never felt that it had changed; but when I went back to my old familiar haunts, and looked into the faces of the boys I once knew, I saw scarcely a line to call back their images to my mind. These bashful little boys were bent and gray and old, and had almost reached their journey's end. And when I asked for familiar names, over and over again I was pointed to the white stones that now covered our old playground and were persistently crawling up the hill beyond the little rivulet that once marked the farthest limits of the yard. So many times was I referred to the graveyard for the answer to the name I called, that finally I did not dare to ask, "Where is John Cole?" or Thomas Clark, but instead of this I would break the news more gently to myself, and say, "Is John Cole living still?" or, "Is Thomas Clark yet dead?"

I am most disconsolate because I could not tell the story that I meant to write, and I can scarce forgive this weird fantastic troop that pushed themselves before my pencil and would not let me tell my tale. Yet, after all,—the everlasting "after all" that excuses all, and in some poor fashion decks even the most worthless life,—yet, after all, there

was little that I could have told had I done my very best. Even now I might sum up my story in a few short words.

All my life I have been planning and hoping and thinking and dreaming and loitering and waiting. All my life I have been getting ready to begin to do something worth the while. I have been waiting for the summer and waiting for the fall; I have been waiting for the winter and waiting for the spring; waiting for the night and waiting for the morning; waiting and dawdling and dreaming, until the day is almost spent and the twilight close at hand.

THE END

PRESS COMMENTS ON CLARENCE DARROW'S

FARMINGTON
AN IDYL OF BOYHOOD

The book is indeed an "idyl." It is universal. It is as quiet as a woodland pool and as pellucid and spontaneous as the springs that feed the pool.— *Chicago Tribune.*

Any man, worn and tired from the world's rush and worry, can be made a boy again for a few brief hours by going with Mr. Darrow to "Farmington."— *New York Globe.*

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It is a book of charm to the man of action for the new and alluring fancies it will reveal to him, to the imaginative man for the thrills it will bring him as if of echoes from his own past.— *Chicago Chronicle.*

The author's affections light his footsteps through the dear old haunts, and he writes in a simple lyric strain of humor and pathos that captivates the heart. He visits, with that wistfulness known to us all, the sacred places where he fished and roamed the fields as a care-free urchin; looks into the old home and school and church; recalls his quaint illusions, long vanished; recalls the joys of the summer vacation; and lingers around the fascinating old mill, now crumbling away, where his father ground the farmers' grist. Mr. Darrow has made a book of genuine literary beauty and haunting human interest.— *Chicago Record-Herald.*

You will not fall asleep over this book recalling the old water-mill in Pennsylvania. Boyhood's experiences — the thoughts, dreams, happenings of boyhood — are related without effort. You hear the story-teller; you do not read what he has printed, because you are actually sitting beside him. You see what he sees, feel as he feels. Next to taking a day "off," take an hour or two and read "Farmington."— *The Pittsburg Index.*

$1.50

PRESS COMMENTS ON CLARENCE DARROW'S

FARMINGTON
AN IDYL OF BOYHOOD

The book is very charming, and in much very true. Not a man who has been a real country boy, or who has been cheated by his elders (always with the best motives) of being all the boy he might have been, but, if he has grown up to be ripe enough, will seem to find himself again in many of Mr. Darrow's pages.

He "spoils the attitude" of the orthodox writers about childhood, insisting (in all love and tenderness) on the tragedy of the attempt of parents to mould the life of their offspring, to instil virtue into them by precept, to make them pore over their books when all the bounding life of youth calls for out-of-doors and play. In the manner of the telling, and in the spirit behind the telling, is a reminiscence of Heine, in those autobiographical scraps of his, something of the same feeling of the tragedy of the joys of youth missed and gone, something of the same serio-comic attitude toward other people's meddlings.

Our impression is that Mr. Darrow has shown real art in the handling of one of the most difficult forms of literature.— *The New York Times.*

Since Mr. Howells's delightful idyl of boyhood, "A Boy's Town," there has perhaps been no worthier companion volume than Mr. Darrow's "Farmington." If one were born a boy, and has lived long enough to be able to look back and understand what it was to be young, and what his youth has meant to him ever since, he will find his real self again in these limpid pages. And if he be lucky enough to have begun life in the country, or in a village which was so small as to be almost the same thing, tucked in beside a millstream that divided two high hills, he will see with his waking eyes the places and the people that come to him in dreams,— dreams that are perhaps the best part of his life. . . .

"Farmington" is not a book to be taken from the public library, or even to be borrowed from an obliging friend. It is not a book for the limited express, or the smoking-room of an inn. It is a book to own, to read by the winter's fire, and re-read under a summer tree,— a book to be kept on the shelf where the oldest favorites live. It is a book for boys, for women — but above all, it is a book for men who have once been boys.

— *The Dial.*

$1.50